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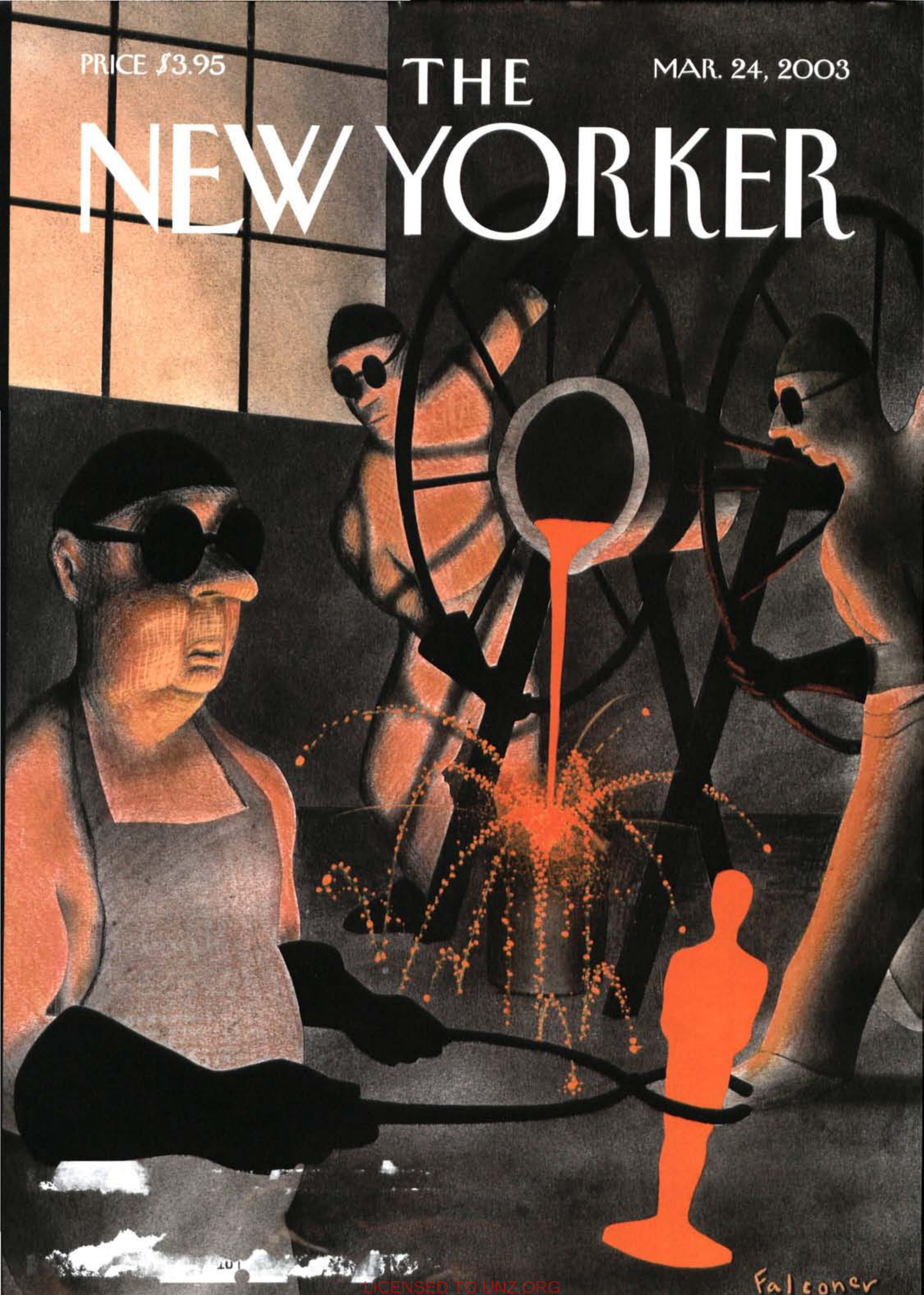

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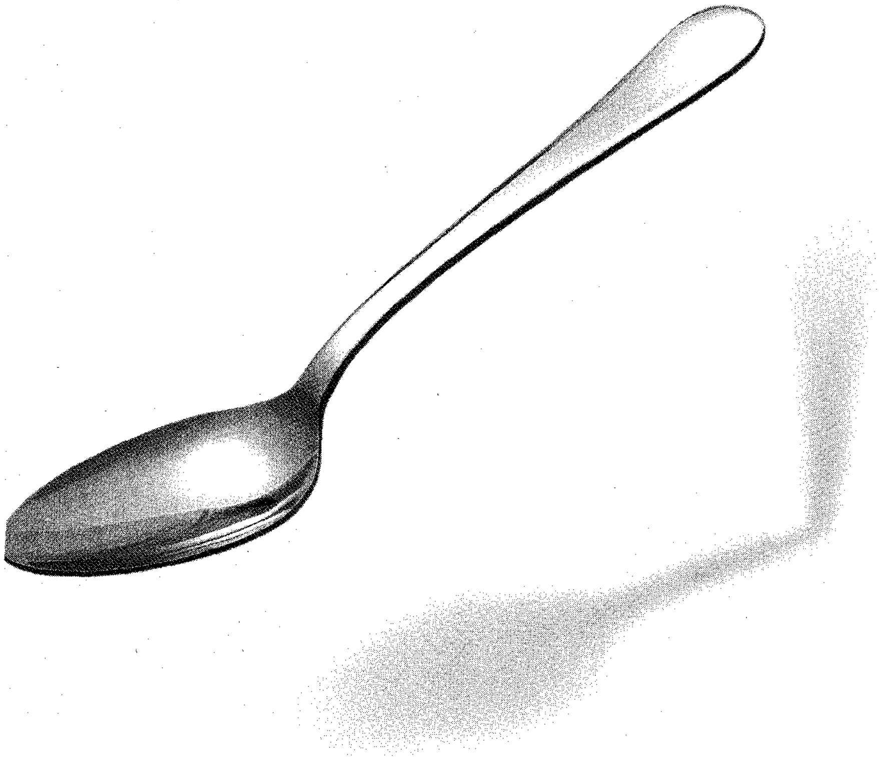

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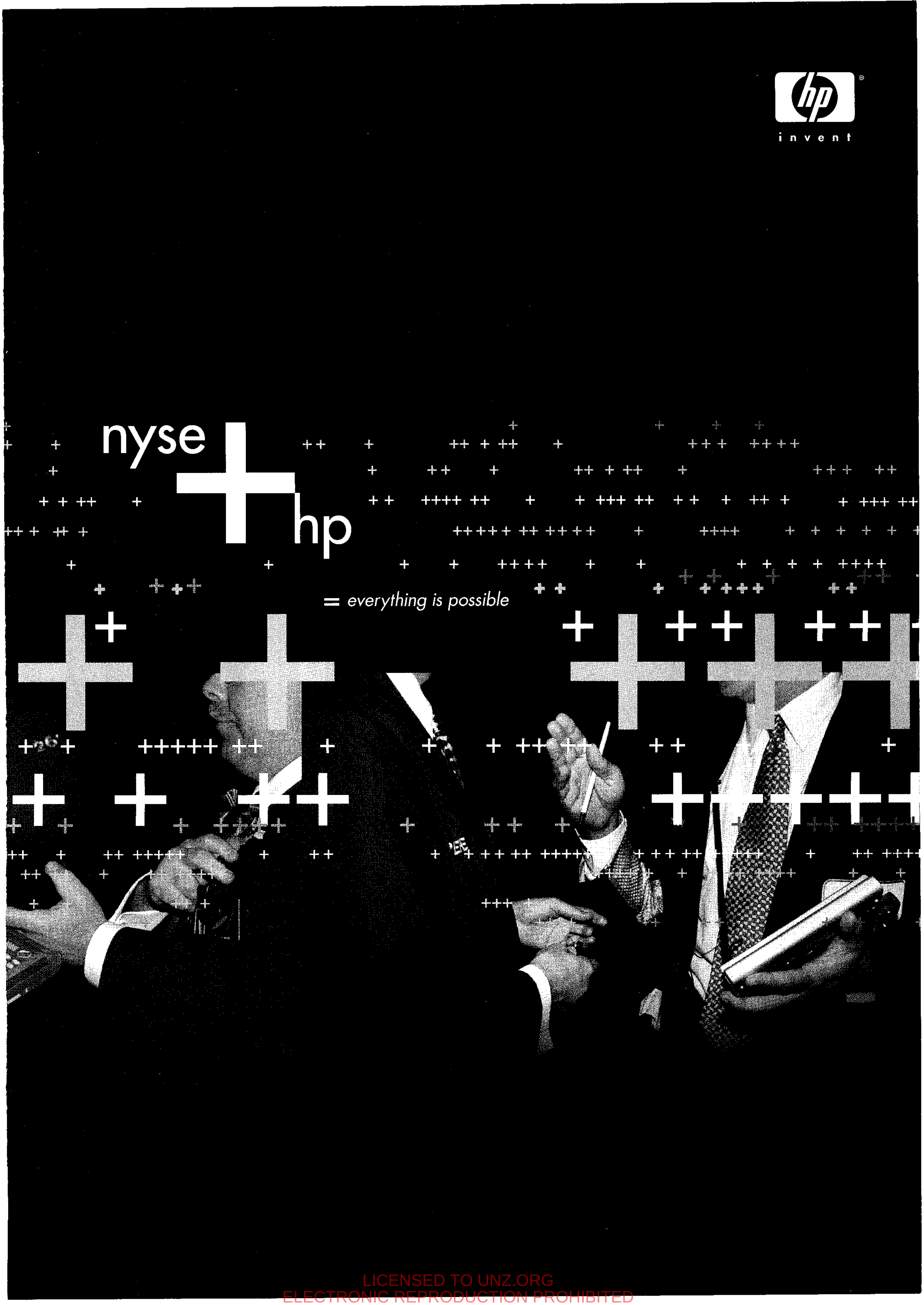
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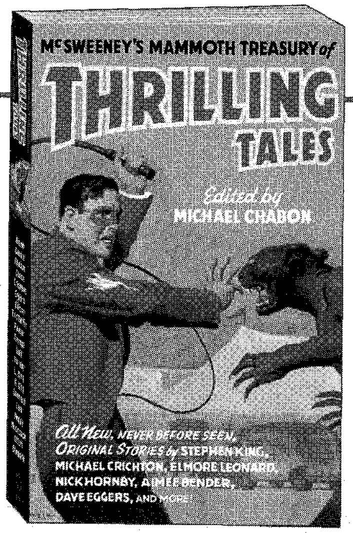
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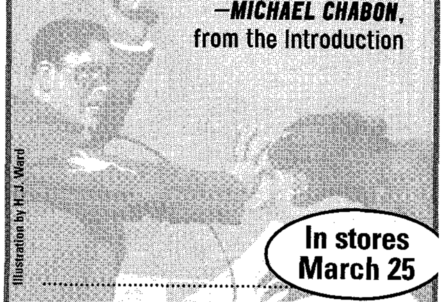
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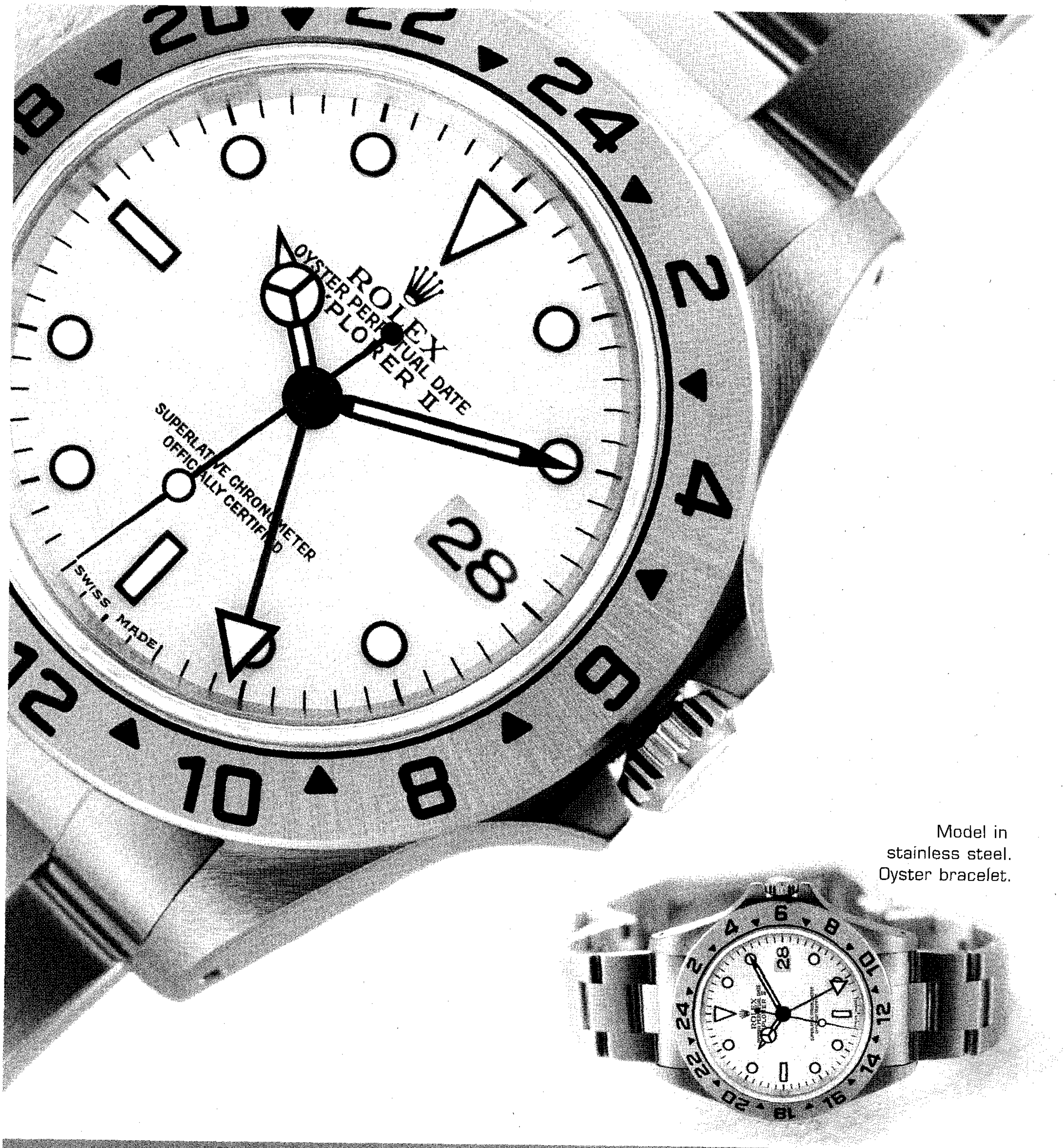
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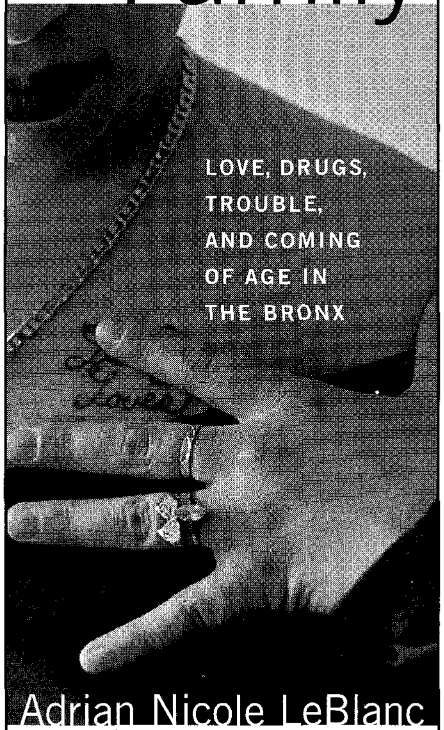
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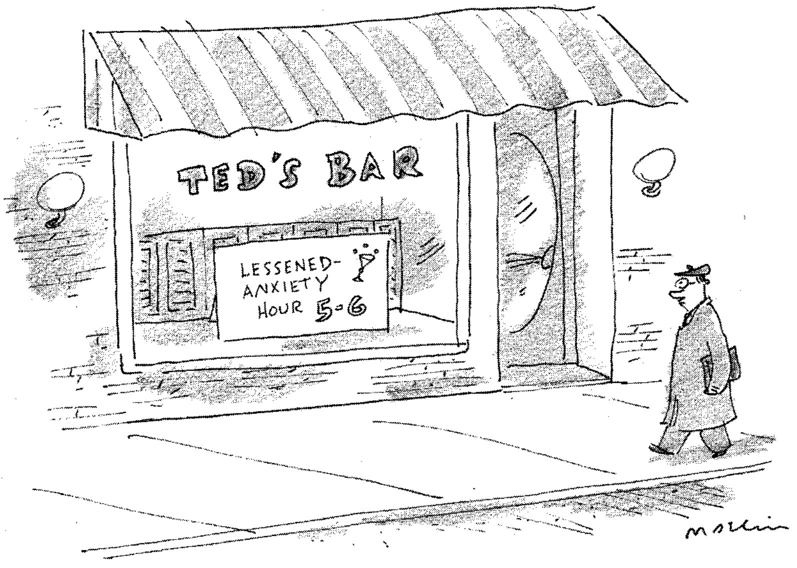

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THE MAIL

SAFE FOR DEMOCRACY?

Can the hawks in the Bush Administration truly be so naïve as to believe that they can, by removing Saddam Hussein, force a conversion to democracy throughout the Middle East, as Nicholas Lemann reports ("After Iraq," February 17th & 24th)? If the post-Communist period has demonstrated anything, it is that, in order to flourish, liberal democracy requires an environment of mutual trust among citizens which can be nurtured only with patience, a spirit of coöperation and compromise, and time. Central European nations, with some experience of democracy and, earlier, with the Enlightenment, had a foundation on which to build open societies, and they have mostly done so. The lands of the former Russian empire, with their experience of monarchy and dictatorship, have had far less success. The recent history of much of the Middle East—tribalism followed by colonialism, monarchy, revolution, and dictatorship—suggests that a halfhearted attempt at liberal democracy would run the risk of degenerating into anarchy. Perhaps if the Bush Administration made it clear that it was aware of the postwar commitment required to realize its larger goals, and estimated the costs and put them into its budget, more optimism would be justified. But for now there is only the irony, or maybe just hypocrisy, of a superpower well versed in the language of democracy which believes it can create liberal, open societies simply by going to war.
Greg Payne
Toronto, Ontario

Lemann identifies the crucial danger facing our Middle Eastern policy. If we fail, as we have in Afghanistan, to rebuild Iraq responsibly and empower its people, we will send a troubling message that will echo throughout the region. If we also fail to find a resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian crisis that is seen as equitable, or to show that we are committed to improving the region's prosperity, any elections or changes of government are likely to result in regimes significantly more hostile to the United States than those now in place.
Charles Stewart Goodwin
Cotuit, Mass.

CURING DIABETES

Jerome Groopman asks why it was so hard for diabetes research to move beyond the status quo and toward a cure ("The Edmonton Protocol," February 10th). An answer may lie in the vested interest that the pharmaceutical and diabetes-delivery-systems industries have in treating a chronic disease. A lifetime's worth of lancets, syringes, monitoring devices, and insulin, for a million users in this country alone, sustains a multibillion-dollar industry. This has acted as a real disincentive, if not an outright impediment, to the search for a cure.
Sara C. Evans
New York City

Like the patient in Groopman's article, I have Type 1 diabetes. And yet I am not sure that the doctors at work on islet transplants offer something I want. The high blood sugar in Type 1 diabetes, and thus much of the damage, can be the result of food choices: the American diet is loaded with processed carbohydrates and sweets, which quickly raise blood sugar even in non-diabetics. A ten-year study of the effect of tight monitoring and control of blood sugar in Type 1 diabetics found that this approach markedly reduces secondary complications. The results were so conclusive that the study was stopped a year early. Given that many of the complications of Type 1 diabetes can be mitigated, or at least delayed, by insulin and diet, is it responsible to carry out tests of transplants which involve other dangers to health, such as the use of immunosuppressive drugs?
Stephen A. Douglass
Oberlin, Ohio

•

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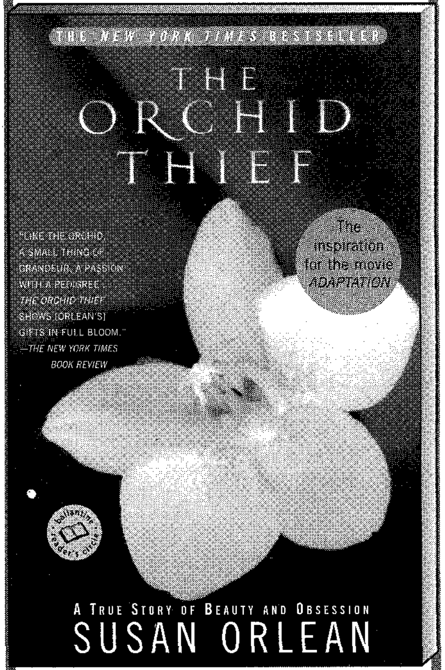
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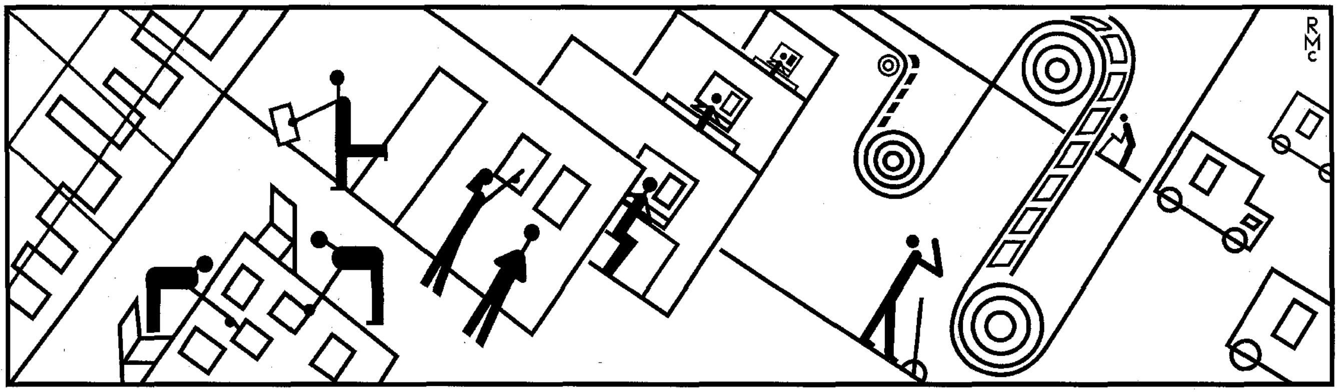

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THE THEATRE

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

AIR RAID
The National Asian American Theatre Company presents the first staged production of Archibald MacLeish's 1938 radio play, with an all-Asian-American cast. In previews. Opens March 21 at 10:30. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 212-647-0202.)

AVENUE Q
A new musical with music and lyrics by Robert Lopez and Jeff Marx and a book by Jeff Whitty chronicles the post-collegiate lives of twentysomethings in the East Village. The cast includes both humans and foulmouthed, multiply pierced puppets. Opens March 19 at 8. (Vineyard, 108 E. 15th St. 212-239-6200.)

A DAY IN THE DEATH OF JOE EGG
Eddie Izzard and Victoria Hamilton star in a revival of Peter Nichols' dark comedy, which has travelled to New York from London's West End, about a couple raising a handicapped child. Directed by Laurence Boswell. In previews. (American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 212-719-1300.)

DON JUAN
Theatre for a New Audience closes its season with Christopher Hampton's translation of Molière's play, with Byron Jennings as Don Juan and John Christopher Jones as his servant, Sganarelle. Directed by Bartlett Sher. In previews. Opens March 23 at 6. (Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 212-239-6200.)

EMPRESS OF CHINA
Pan Asian Repertory presents Ruth Wolff's play about Tzu-Hsi, the "Dragon Empress" who ruled China for nearly fifty years during the Ching dynasty. Tisa Chang directs. Opens March 19 at 8. (West End, 263 W. 86th St. 212-505-5655.)

THE GIFT
Shauna Kanter's play, about a young American who tries to rescue a Jewish family from Nazi Germany, travels in time between 1939 and 1965 and includes original music and floor-to-ceiling archival footage. In previews. Opens March 22 at 8. (T. Schreiber Studio, 151 W. 26th St. 212-741-0265.)

GOD AND MR. SMITH
In a new comedy by Travis Baker ("Peeps, a Modern Tragedy"), directed by Marshall Mays, a man struggles to prove his identity after a computer glitch steals it. In previews. Opens March 20 at 8. (Mint, 311 W. 43rd St. 212-352-3101.)

GOLDA'S BALCONY
Tovah Feldshuh is Golda Meir in a new play about the Israeli leader, written by William Gibson (author of "The Miracle Worker") and presented by Manhattan Ensemble Theatre. Scott Schwartz directs. In previews. (55 Mercer St. 212-239-6200.)

HASHIRIGAKI
Théâtre Vidy-Lausanne comes to BAM with Heiner Goebbels' stream-of-consciousness play (*hashirigaki* means "flowing cursive script" in Japanese), which includes text from Gertrude Stein's book "The Making of Americans" and music from the Beach Boys album "Pet Sounds." March 19-22 at 7:30 and March 23 at 3. (BAM's Harvey Theatre, 30 Lafayette Ave. 718-636-4100.)

HOW HIS BRIDE CAME TO ABRAHAM
The Praxis Theatre Project presents a new play by Karen Sunde, set in occupied Lebanon near the Israeli border, in which an Israeli Defense Forces lieutenant and a young Palestinian woman are forced to spend a night together. Amir Babayoff and Maya Serhan play the leads. Courtney Patrick Mitchell directs. In previews. Opens March 23 at 8. (Looking Glass, 422 W. 57th St. 212-206-1515.)

LIFE (X) 3
A new comedy by Yasmina Reza ("Art") stars Helen Hunt and John Turturro and is directed by Matthew Warchus. In previews. (Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 212-239-6200.)

LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST
In the British director Kit Thacker's retooling of Shakespeare's romantic comedy about philosophy-spouting women and their sophistic male suitors, men and women switch roles: the women renounce male society and must be convinced to change their minds. One preview on March 19. Opens March 20 at 8. (Tribeca Playhouse, 111 Reade St. 212-206-1515.)

MIDNIGHT'S CHILDREN
The Royal Shakespeare Company brings its production of Salman Rushdie's tale to the Apollo for twelve performances. March 21-30. (253 W. 125th St. 212-307-7171.)

NINE
The Roundabout Theatre Company presents a revival of the Tony Award-winning musical based on Fellini's "8½," performed by an all-star cast that includes Antonio Banderas, Laura Benanti, Jane Krakowski, Mary Stuart Masterson, and Chita Rivera. David Leveaux directs. In previews. (Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE PLAY WHAT I WROTE
Mike Nichols has helped bring this hit play over from London, about one-half of a comedy duo who wants to dump his partner and put on his own play but first needs to cast a major actor to play his costar. Starring Sean Foley and Hamish McColl as the team, with a secret roster of guest stars. Kenneth Branagh directs. In previews. (Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

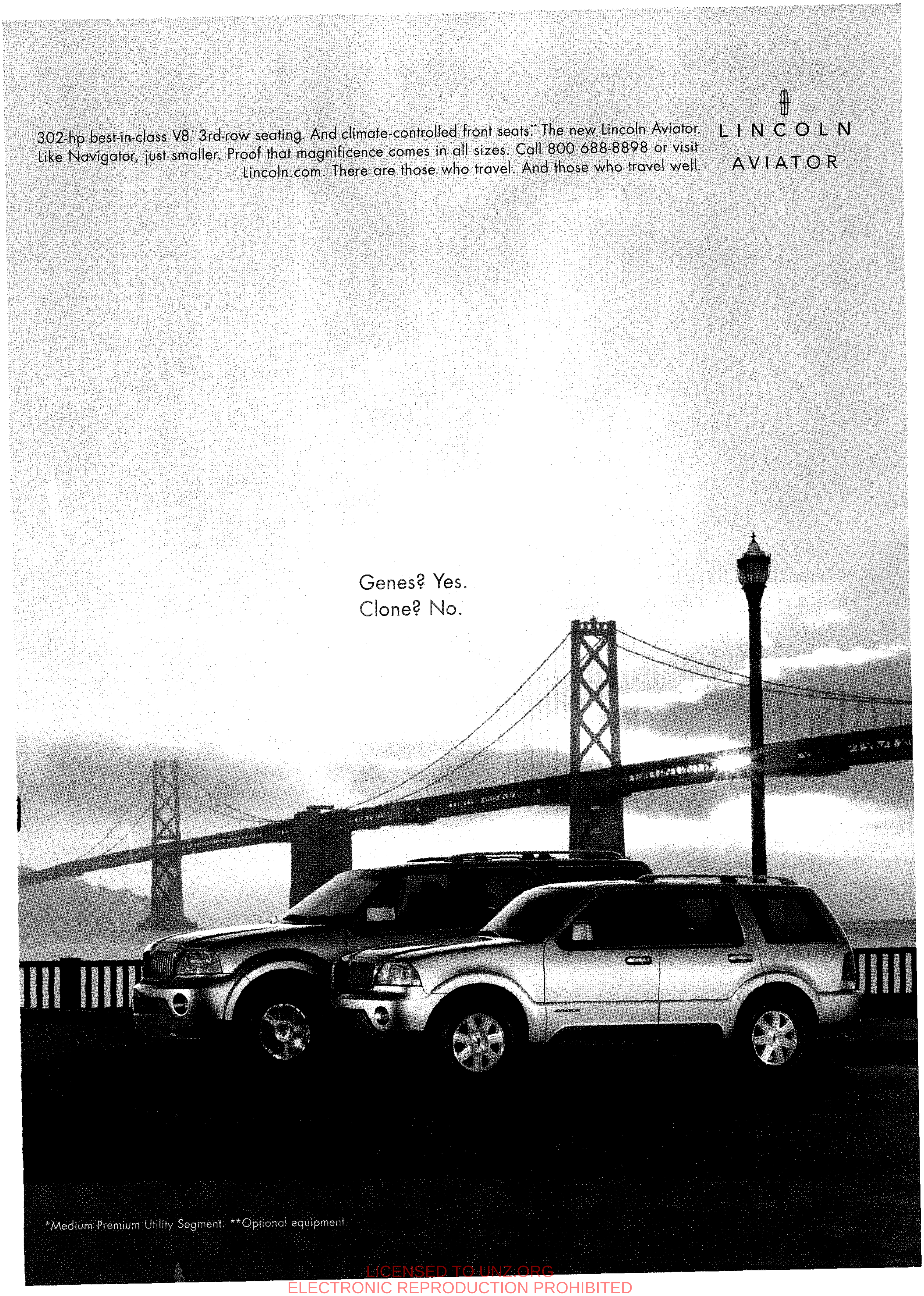
TALKING HEADS
Six solo plays by Alan Bennet ("A Chip in the Sugar," "Miss Fozzard Finds Her Feet," "Bed Among the Lentils," and others) come to the Minetta Lane Theatre, in two alternating programs. Michael Engler directs. Previews begin March 22. (18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 212-307-4100.)

URBAN COWBOY
A musical based on the 1980 film stars Matt Cavenaugh and Jenn Colella. Directed by Lonny Price and choreographed by Melinda Roy, with musical direction by Jason Robert Brown. In previews. (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.)

OPENED RECENTLY

BARBRA'S WEDDING
If "Seinfeld" was a show about nothing, Daniel Stern's comedy is a play about nothing—although this nothing is really something. A neurotic out-of-work actor (John Pankow) spends the day in his modest Malibu bungalow kvetching at his wife (Julie White) as helicopters and names-in-bold descend on Barbra Streisand's nearby mansion for her wedding. Neil Patel sets the mood with a detail-perfect set—a middle-class California living room and kitchen whose walls shake when the whirlybirds fly over. Well directed by David Warren. (Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 212-239-6200.)

THE BLACKS: A CLOWN SHOW
The blacks of the title are on trial for the murder of a white woman, but the underlying theme of Jean Genet's play isn't murder, it's the tension between blacks (the underclass) and whites (who represent authority). In the Classical Theatre of Harlem's staging, the whites who condescendingly judge the defendants—the Queen, the Judge, the Pope, and so on—are played by black actors in masks. As the two groups interact, they treat us to lyrical discourses on colonialism, sex myths, and the nature of power. This extraordinary production, which combines elements from minstrelsy, commedia dell'arte, and Chitlin Circuit routines, has been arrestingly directed by Christopher McElroen; on occasion, the actors single out members of the audience, involving them in the drama. Standouts in the strong cast are Robin Walker, as the Queen, and Ty Jones, as Archibald, a sort of master of ceremonies. (East Thirteenth Street Theatre, 136 E. 13th St. 212-206-1515. Closes April 6.)



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The Royal Shakespeare Company performs Salman Rushdie's "Midnight's Children."

BRACE UP! (2003)
In the Wooster Group's exceptional reimagining of Chekhov's "Three Sisters," which it first performed in 1991, elements of Kabuki and video projection have been added. As ever, Olga, Masha, and Irina live with their brother, Andrei, in a provincial town, longing for Moscow, but here the actors recite Chekhov's lines as if they were props, things that support the action but wouldn't be missed if mislaid. As Andrei's wife, Natalya—the social-climbing rube who tries to break through the sisters' decorum—Anna Köhler provides the show with its emotional center, exposing the trap of the family's snobbery. (Reviewed in our issue of 3/10/03.) (St. Ann's Warehouse, 38 Water St., Brooklyn. 718-858-2424.)

BUICKS
Julian Sheppard's play gets off to a fast start with percussive engine revving and funky music mixed by the sound designer Darron L. West. After a terrific opening-scene sales pitch by the protagonist, Bill (Norbert Leo Butz), the owner of a Fresno car dealership, the truth about his life emerges: it's a wreck. Business is bad, and his wife (Olivia Birkelund) has just left him and taken the kids. In a brisk sequence of well-written scenes, Bill goes on the road with his Mexican assistant, Naranja (Lucia Brawley), to chase after her. Director Brian Kulick keeps up the speed, and Bill Buell tackles six key supporting roles, proving himself a formidable comedian. (McGinn/Cazale, Broadway at 76th St. 212-206-1515. Closes March 30.)

LA FIESTA DEL CHIVO
(THE FEAST OF THE GOAT)
The Repertorio Español's staged production of Mario Vargas Llosa's novel "The Feast of the Goat," about the Dominican despot General Rafael Leónidas Trujillo, conjures the mood of a Saul Steinberg cartoon: violence, pomp, sexual corruption, and abuse of power. The director, Jorge Alí Triana (who adapted the novel with his daughter Verónica), sustains the spell throughout this stirring production. In Spanish, with simultaneous-translation headsets available in English. (Gramercy Arts, 138 E. 27th St. 212-889-2850.)

FIFTH OF JULY
Rarely has dialogue flown as surely as it does in this 1978 play, the first in Lanford Wilson's trilogy about the unconventional Talleys of conventional Lebanon, Missouri. Robert Sean Leonard is convincing as Kenny Talley, paralyzed in the Vietnam War, whose terror of his future is more moving than his inability to walk, and Parker Posey gives a breakthrough performance as Gwen, the woman married to the hunk John Landis (well played by David Harbour), whom Kenny and his sister, June, lusted after at Berkeley. Posey's Gwen is vital, mischievous, and surprising—a generous narcissist. The cast members work superbly together, fired by Jo Bonney's direction and Wilson's dynamic script. (Peter Norton Space, 555 W. 42nd St. 212-244-7529. Closes April 6.)

FUCKING A
The Public Theatre presents a new work by Suzan-Lori Parks, a reimagining of "The Scarlet Letter" that incorporates ten original songs into a drama about abortion and revenge. Directed by Michael Greif. (425 Lafayette St. 212-239-6200.)

HEARTBREAK HOUSE
George Bernard Shaw's 1917 play, written during the First World War, addresses the losses the war would bring—from a dearth of eligible suitors for England's women to the waning of the British Empire. Though typically Shavian in its preachiness, the play is also typical in its mixture of wit, offhand charm, and social insight. Gus Kaikkonen's clear-headed direction jibes with the peerless timing of a talented cast led by George Morfogen (Captain Shotover) and Rachel Botchan (Ellie Dunn) to create a strong revival of a timely play. (Pearl, 80 St. Marks Pl. 212-598-9802. Closes April 6.)

LOVECRAFT: NIGHTMARE SUITE
The gothic horror fiction of H. P. Lovecraft has been brought to the stage by Cobblestone Productions. Directed by Dan Spurgeon, who conceived the project. (Common Basis Theatre, 750 Eighth Ave., at 46th St. 212-414-5420. Closes March 30.)

MARATHON
The People's Theatre presents a critically acclaimed play by the Italian playwright Edoardo Erba, adapted by Israel Horovitz, about two men who develop a friendship as they train for the New York City Marathon. (Producers Club, 358 W. 44th St. 212-279-4499. Closes April 6.)

MY LIFE WITH ALBERTINE
You'd think it would be hard to sentimentalize Proust more than he sentimentalized himself—*mais non*. In this mawkish musical, the young Proust is played by the plump-cheeked, all-American Chad Kimball, who projects all the Gallic writerly aura of Doogie Howser. Brent Carver is more believable as the older Proust, but neither player looks remotely like the author. Kelli O'Hara is fine as the lusty, bi-curious Albertine, and her singing is nice, but her role is impossibly conceived. Lines like "Kiss me, tongue me" should never be spoken, much less sung. Proust's Albertine was based on a young man, not a woman, which makes the character's confusing contradictions more comprehensible, but the playwright, Richard Nelson, ignored this subtext, aiming for a conventional romance. "So farewell and go to hell," young Proust sings peevishly, when Albertine decamps. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

OBSERVE THE SONS OF ULSTER
MARCHING TOWARDS THE SOMME
On a beautiful set, built by Alexander Dodge and lit by Donald Holde, a platoon of Irish Protestant volunteers struggle with their pride, their fear, and their duty on the eve of one of the bloodiest battles of the First World War. The fine and versatile ensemble is well equipped to carry off Frank McGuinness's charged dialogues, and Justin Theroux shines as the lone toff in the bunch, and the lone survivor. Directed by Nicholas Martin. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 212-239-6200.)

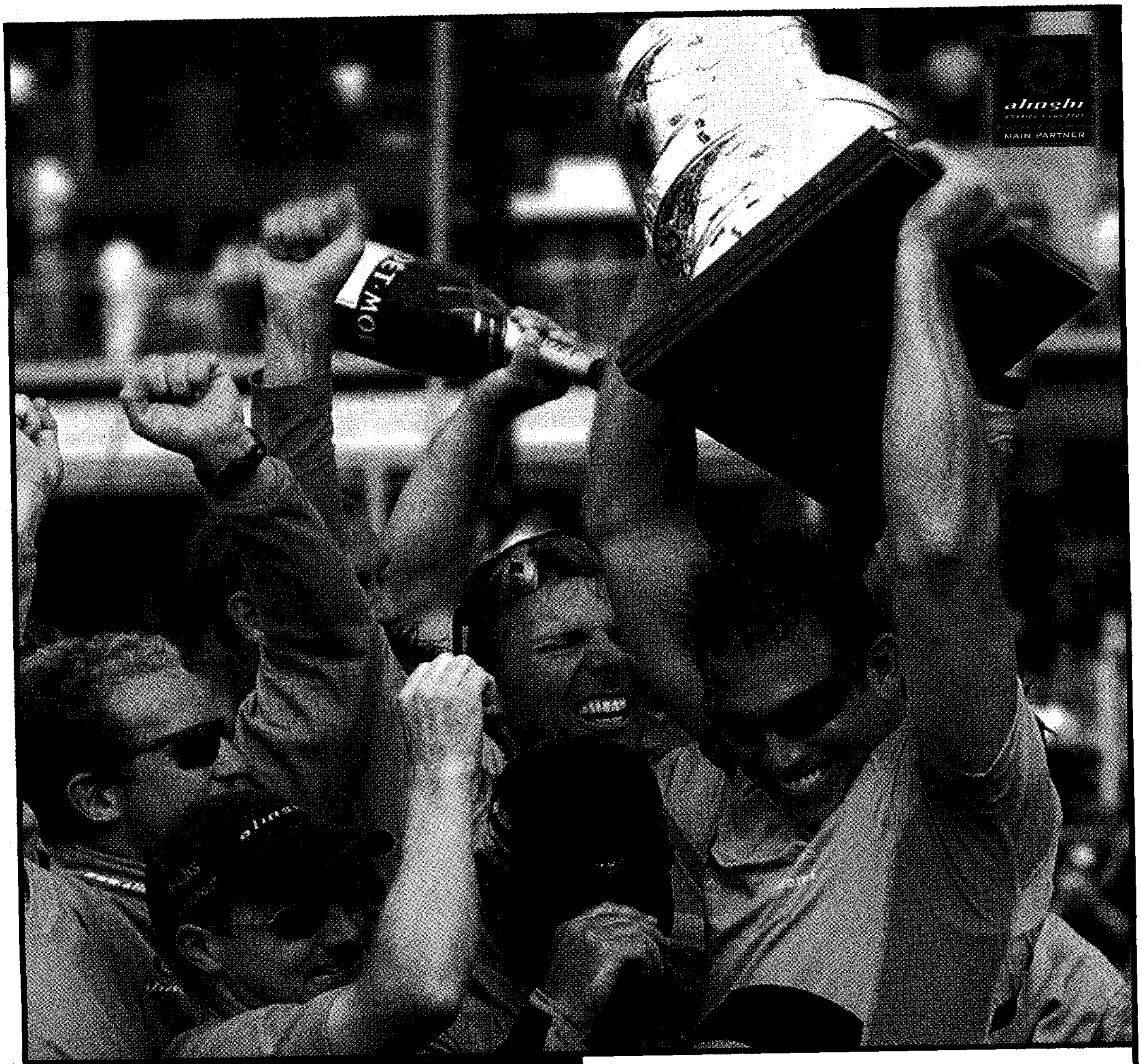
O JERUSALEM
The Flea Theatre presents a new play by A. R. Gurney about a U.S. State Department official whose career and personal life are complicated by the events of 9/11. Stephen Rowe, Priscilla Shanks, and Rita Wolf lead the cast. Directed by Jim Simpson. (Flea, 41 White St. 212-226-2407.)

OUR LADY OF 121ST STREET
Stephen Adly Guirgis's play speaks gorgeously to our deracinated times. A group of fractured souls congregate at the Ortiz Funeral Home in Harlem to mourn Sister Rose—a nun who had taught most of them as children—but the wake turns into a vigil when Sister Rose is stolen from her casket. Guirgis's brilliantly drawn characters have been punished by life after their school days and exhausted by their grievances. Like the stolen corpse, the characters' sense of loss is a fact of life that is both their tragedy and their own doing. Burnished to a shine by Philip Seymour Hoffman's deft direction, "Our Lady of 121st Street" is a fever chart of the heart's deceptions. (10/14 & 21/02) (Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 212-307-4100.)

SUN-UP
Metropolitan Playhouse has revived Lula Vollmer's 1923 melodrama about an Appalachian widow whose husband was killed by federal agents for making moonshine, and whose son is about to become a soldier in the First World War. Mahayana Landowne directs. (220A E. 4th St. 212-995-5302.)

TEA AT FIVE
Matthew Lombardo's play about Katharine Hepburn is a theatrical homage: whether or not you like it will depend on the degree of your fascination with the leading lady herself. This one-woman show, performed by Kate Mulgrew, who bears an uncanny resemblance in face and voice to the star, is set at Hepburn's estate in Connecticut at two junctures in her career: in 1938, after a series of flops, as she waited to hear if she would be cast as Scarlett O'Hara, and in 1983, as she struggled with Parkinson's and considered whether to resume acting after a long hiatus. Mulgrew's impersonation is remarkable, although, in the first act, it can be disconcerting to watch her shapely form assume young Hepburn's rangy tomboy poses. She's more effective in the second act, in which she incarnates a vision of Hepburn pulled straight from a still of "On Golden Pond," but the second act is stronger anyway. Lombardo wrote the first act like a first date—all flirting and small talk—and saved the secrets and scandal for the second. Directed by John Tillinger. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 212-239-6200.)

ZOHAR LAZAR



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ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

VINCENT IN BRIXTON
Nicholas Wright's play about the young Vincent Van Gogh's affair with his London landlady shows one complicated collision between genius and domestic order. As the artist, the Dutch actor Jochum ten Haaf gives a startling portrayal of the ugly, messy pursuit of love and the recklessness of self-invention. Ten Haaf uses the stage as if it were a dance floor; he lurches and rocks and extends his arms abruptly as he struggles to match the rhythm of the other characters: a punk rocker trying to waltz. Even in his quiet moments—when he's listening or waiting for a response—he vibrates with a love of performance that merges with Vincent's love of painting. Under the masterly direction of Richard Eyre, Vincent undresses the soul of his older lover, Mrs. Loyer (Clare Higgins), and Higgins lets us see the striptease. (3/17/03) (Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

DANCE

BALLET TECH
Over the years, Eliot Feld has made several ballets for his old friend Mikhail Baryshnikov. This year, he asked him to take the narrator's role in "Lincoln Portrait," a response to 9/11. Worried about his accent, Baryshnikov offered to perform instead. And so Feld created "Mr. XYZ," a prop dance, à la Astaire, set to Jazz Age tunes sung by Leon Redbone. Baryshnikov enters the scene as a sad sack in suspenders, sunglasses, and a pork-pie hat, carrying a cane. As Redbone sings "My Walking Stick," Baryshnikov manipulates the cane with jokey ribaldry, leaning on it, posing it lewdly, and even straddling it—keeping a straight face all the while. For the song "Lulu's Back in Town," a mannequin rolls in from offstage, and he mischievously engages it in dance, shimmying and swivelling. ♦ March 19 at 8: "Aurora I," "Impromptu," "Mr. XYZ," "Lincoln Portrait," and "Behold the Man." ♦ March 20 at 8: "Paper Tiger," "French Overtures," and "Pianola: Raven." ♦ March 21 at 8: "Simon Sez," "Endsong," and "Paper Tiger." ♦ March 22 at 8: "Against the Sky," "Endsong," and "Behold the Man." ♦ March 23 at 2: "Straw Hearts," "Simon Sez," and "Pacific Dances." ♦ March 25: "French Overtures," "Pianola: Indigo," "Tongue & Groove," "Mr. XYZ," and "Lincoln Portrait." (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. Through April 13.)

LYDIA JOHNSON DANCE
In a dramatic ensemble piece set to Hindemith, duetting couples interlock with machine precision; the women move with balletic grace, and the men tenderly cradle their partners' heads. In lithe, spirited solos and duets, women interpret Aimee Mann's "Momentum" and Cake's "Short Skirt, Long Jacket." (DiCapo Opera Theatre, 184 E. 76th St. 212-924-0077. March 22 at 9 and March 23 at 3.)

DANCE THEATRE WORKSHOP
Mia Lawrence, who once danced for many New York choreographers, has lived in northern Europe for four years and now returns to New York to join the D.T.W. "Carnival" lineup. Her première "Hide and Seek" shows signs of her transplantation, conjuring the wry mood and murky plot of a foreign art film. Lawrence, who is seven months pregnant, murmurs into the microphone as three urbane dancers (whom she met in Europe) doodle diagrams with chalk, play hopscotch, and abruptly ask each other portentous questions. Jeanluc Ducourt's spotlights alternately obscure or expose the dancers, and Guy Yarden accompanies them with electronic sound textures. (219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. March 18-19 and March 25 at 7. Through March 28. Call the box office for the full "Carnival" schedule.)

FEAST
Julia Mandle, the director of J Mandle Performance, likes to set her work in unusual spaces. For "Feast," the group's new hybrid dance performance and gallery installation, co-presented with Danspace Project's "Out of Space" series, she chose a cavernous, five-thousand-square-foot former stable on the Brooklyn waterfront. Nested within the stable is an enormous windowed structure through which the audience can watch four dancers, dressed in exaggeratedly geometric costumes, enacting scenes inspired by Plato's "Symposium." The company, gathered around a tabletop, takes part in a slow-motion banquet, choreographed by Beppie Blankert, in which the dancers themselves are the table's legs; hollows cut in the tabletop make room for them. Observers may enter the space every half hour over a three-hour period and wander at will, watching the spectacle or seeking conversation and refreshment in the second-floor lounge, up where the horses used to feed. (The Stable, 16 Main St., Dumbo, Brooklyn. 718-246-7440. March 20-21 from 7 to 10 and March 22-23 from 4 to 7. Through April 6.)

SEÁN CURRAN COMPANY
The *amadinda*, an East African xylophone-like instrument that is played simultaneously by three musicians, provides both the accompaniment and the title for Seán Curran's lively new work. Six dancers move in formation, working out puzzle-piece permutations to unusual time signatures, accenting their precision with gestures from Malaysian and Philippine folk dance. Costumes with white fronts and black backs clarify the patterns; the dancers reverse their tops for the second section, and turn checkerboard. The evening includes a suite of other percussion-based pieces, including "Abstract Concrete," inspired by children's drawings stuck on a refrigerator, and "Metal Garden," a romp in shimmering costumes sure to please the tough, kid-heavy audience at the New Victory. (209 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200. March 21 at 7, March 22 at 2 and 7, and March 23 at noon and 5. Through March 30.)

Mike Skinner, who goes by the name the Streets, at Warsaw.

KAREN CALDICOTT

"SHIFT"
For the première "Shift," one of three solos that fix upon a moment and prolong it, Jean Vitrano wears a simple muslin shift. As a soundscape by Guy Yarden plays, Vitrano raises a handkerchief to her eye so slowly that many of Yarden's aural trains rumble by before her hand reaches her brow. She turns rapidly, with a cutting gesture to her throat, so that when she stops, her rib cage heaves with emotion, continuing the dance. In the more legato solo, "Night Blooming Jasmine," Jeanine Durning, as strong as her choreographer, dances to Debussy. (Joyce SoHo, 155 Mercer St. 212-334-7479. March 20-22 at 8.)

NIGHT LIFE

CONCERTS

JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER
The drummer Herlin Riley, one of the unsung mainstays of the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra, gets his moment to shine as he leads the L.C.J.O. in a program called "Evolution of the Groove." (Alice Tully Hall. 212-721-6500. March 20-21 at 8.)

ROSANNE CASH
A few years back, Johnny Cash's smoky-voiced daughter traded in country-music superstardom for the singer-songwriter's trade. Expect plenty of songs from her forthcoming release, "Rules of Travel." With **Laura Cantrell** and **Jesse Harris.** (Housing Works Used Book Café, 126 Crosby St. 212-334-3324. March 21 at 7:30.)

SIGUR RÓS
The Icelandic group, which has usurped Radiohead's reign as the preëminent enigma of quality rock and roll, brings its chilly, evanescent music to Radio City Music Hall, accompanied by the string quartet Anima, who provided the orchestral flourishes on Sigur Rós's most recent unpronounceable album. (Sixth Ave. at 50th St. 212-247-4777. March 21 at 8.)

WALL TO WALL JONI MITCHELL
A free twelve-hour music marathon, in which Laurie Anderson, Martha Wainwright, the Mingus Big Band, and many, many others take on the Canadian iconoclast's songbook. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. For more information, call 212-864-5400. March 22, starting at 11 A.M.)

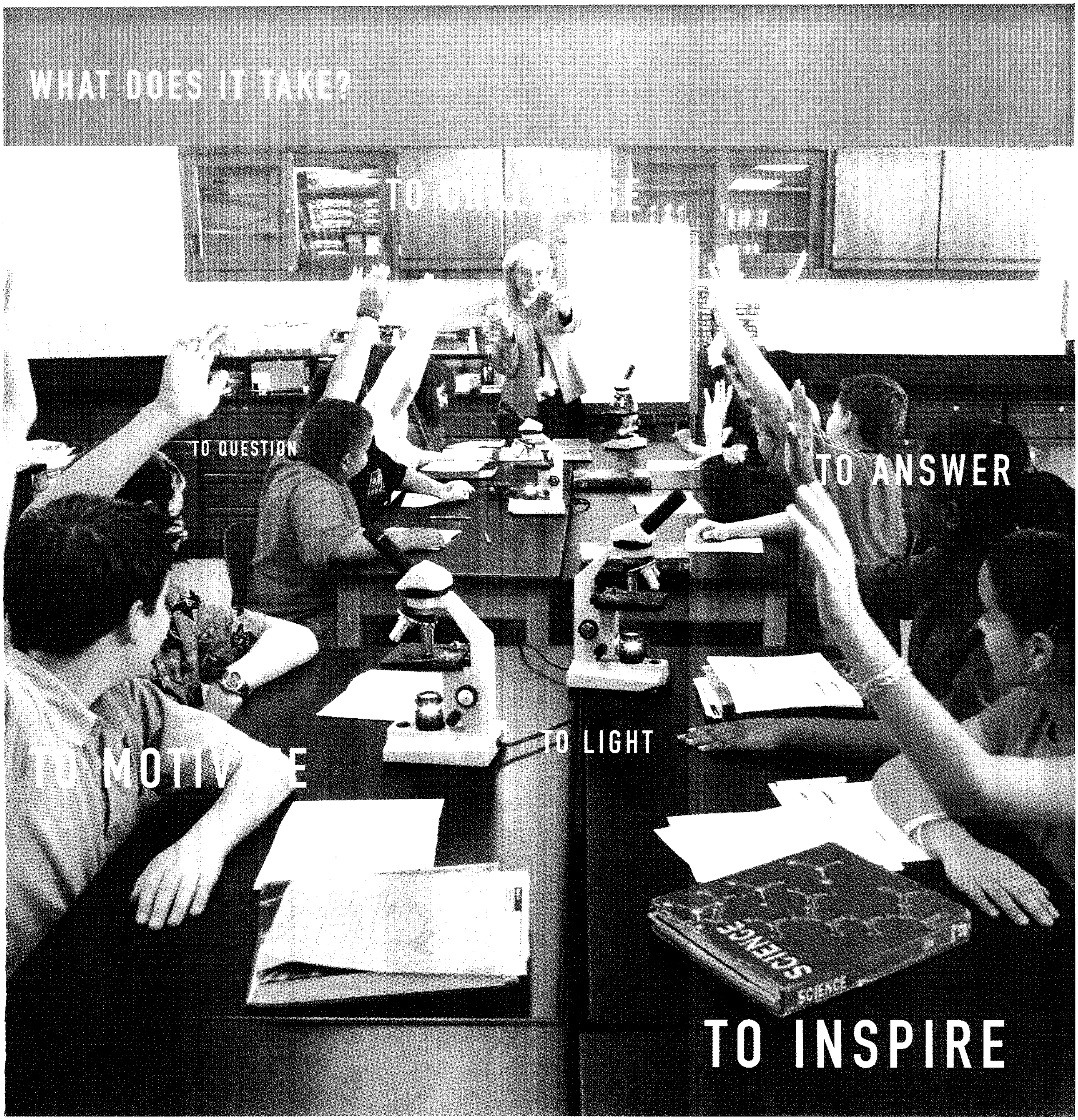
WORLD MUSIC INSTITUTE
A night of Indian music with the master violinist Shankar and the renowned tabla player Zakir Hussain. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. For more information, call 212-545-7536. March 22 at 8.)

CLUBS

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (212-997-4144)—March 23: **Ronnie Montrose**, the first guitar whiz to spar with the vocalist and future Van Halen front man Sammy Hagar, split up his influential Hagar-led heavy-metal band in the late seventies and has since pursued a solo path fluctuating between improvisational rock and power chords.

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—March 20-21: **Rocket from the Crypt**, a six-piece San Diego ensemble complete with sparkling horns and matching greasers-from-Hell rockabilly outfits. March 22: **Calexico**, a band whose principal members have spent time as session players for musicians as varied as Giant Sand, Victoria Williams, and Neko Case, turns out cinematic compositions full of the big-sky feeling of its home town, Tucson, Arizona. With the singer-songwriter **Nina Nastasia.** March 24: Having already won over the fickle British music press with their explosive garage rock and gymnastics-heavy live show, New Zealand's hirsute and perpetually sweaty **Datsuns** hope to win equal approval Stateside.



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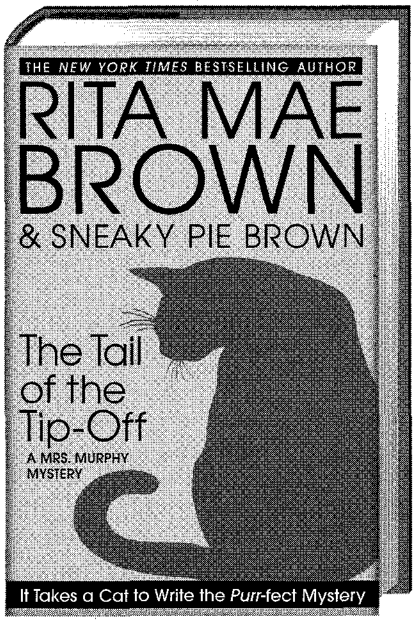
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TABLES FOR TWO

SUPERFINE
126 Front St., Brooklyn (718-243-9005)—This easygoing-hipster restaurant, set amid the theatres and galleries of Dumbo, doubles as a one-stop lifestyle loft for the neighborhood's creative types. Superfine is run by three old friends, Tanya Rynd, Laura Taylor, and Cara Lee Sparry, who started throwing "Superfine Supper Clubs" in the apartment they shared, then turned their flair for dinner parties into a business. "We built out the entire restaurant space ourselves," Rynd said, done up for the Sunday bluegrass brunch in a cowgirl shirt, orange silk pants, geranium-red lipstick, and blond curls.

The women subdivided the former vacuum-cleaner-and-car-parts warehouse into a string of cozy burrows. The sunken wooden bar in the middle looks like the hold of a ship, and the restaurant rises around it, with paintings and photographs on one side and an orange felt pool table surrounded by matching airport-terminal seats on the other. The friends split the work: Rynd takes care of the art and the bands, Sparry oversees the bar and the d.j.s, and Taylor does the cooking.

Superfine's seasonal, Mediterranean menu stresses organic vegetables, fresh fish and squid, and grilled cuts of meat served with unusual sides, like beet greens or winter pea shoots. Taylor gets a lot out of simple dishes; the yellowfin-tuna steak is sushi-grade, and the vegan soups are flavored with hyperconcentrations of asparagus, butternut squash, or the légume du jour.

Best of all, Superfine actually cares about brunch. Every week, the owners fly in green chilies from Albuquerque, which have a creamy texture and a cactusy flavor, to make a sauce for the breakfast burritos, the quesadillas with spinach, and the mahimahi, which is rolled into soft flour tortillas textured with fresh crushed corn. Chase this with a salty dog—their version has fresh-squeezed ruby-red-grapefruit juice and Stoli in a salt-rimmed glass—start listening to the Flat Broke String Band playing "Amazing Grace," and you may find yourself staying through dinner. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays for dinner, Tuesdays through Fridays for lunch, and Sundays for brunch. Entrées $11-$20.)

—*Liesl Schillinger*

IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (212-777-6800)—March 20: Yet another sensation from Sweden, the **Soundtrack of Our Lives** plays a trippy brand of indie rock that matches the ethereal psychedelia of classic Pink Floyd with the rollicking swagger of Iggy & the Stooges. March 21-22: Though perpetually mentioned as forebears of New York's late-seventies punk scene, **Television** always sounded remarkably sophisticated next to the caterwauling of the Ramones, the Dead Boys, and the rest of the CBGB's alumni. Centered around the duelling, angular guitars of Tom Verlaine and Richard Lloyd, the band members weren't afraid to master their instruments, and they employed them in entirely new ways (especially compared to the bloated corporate rock of the day). They ended up influencing legions of bands that followed.

KNITTING FACTORY
74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (212-219-3055)—March 19: Lou Barlow, the former Dinosaur Jr. bassist and eventual front man for the band Sebadoh, has had a long, meandering career that has earned him mountains of credibility with the indie-rock crowd. With his group **Folk Implosion** he also had a surprise hit a few years back with a song on the "Kids" soundtrack. After a brief affair with a major label, Barlow returns for another stab at the big time: in addition to a new self-titled album, Barlow's currently on-screen as one of the rockers in the film "Laurel Canyon." March 20-21: The delicious guitar pop of **Luna.**

NORTHSIX
66 N. 6th St., Williamsburg, Brooklyn (718-599-5103)—March 21: **Cordero** (bilingual lyrics, slide guitar), **AM** (power punk), the **Noble Society** (hip-hop), and other Brooklyn-based bands turn out for a benefit for Doctors Without Borders.

SOUTHPAW
125 Fifth Ave., Park Slope, Brooklyn (718-230-0236)—March 21: **Bettie Serveert** is an Amsterdam quartet (the name is Dutch for "Betty serves," a reference to some long-forgotten tennis legend) that plays deeply satisfying rock with a lean, let's-make-a-record-in-a-day sound.

WARSAW
261 Driggs Ave., Brooklyn (718-387-0505)—March 19: The **Streets** is Mike Skinner, a young man from Birmingham, England, whose début release, "Original Pirate Material," has generated Eminem-like levels of hype. Like warm beer and driving on the left, Skinner's work is something that may or may not survive the trip across the pond, but open-minded Yanks may warm to his catchy hip-hop beats and droll raps about the concerns of the average English youth: drinking, PlayStation, and getting high.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (212-581-3080)—March 21: **Marian McPartland**, the grand dame of mainstream jazz piano, doesn't turn eighty-five every day, so emissaries from the entertainment world, ranging from Phil Woods to Alan King, are turning out to celebrate her. The hale and hearty keyboard stylist and radio personality will be backed by two different rhythm sections.

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—Through March 23: Club owners must check the piano for smoke damage after a typical **Michel Camilio** set. This sleek virtuoso with a penchant for tangy Latin rhythms has simpatico rhythm partners in the bassist **Charles Flores** and drummer **Horatio (El Negro) Hernandez.**

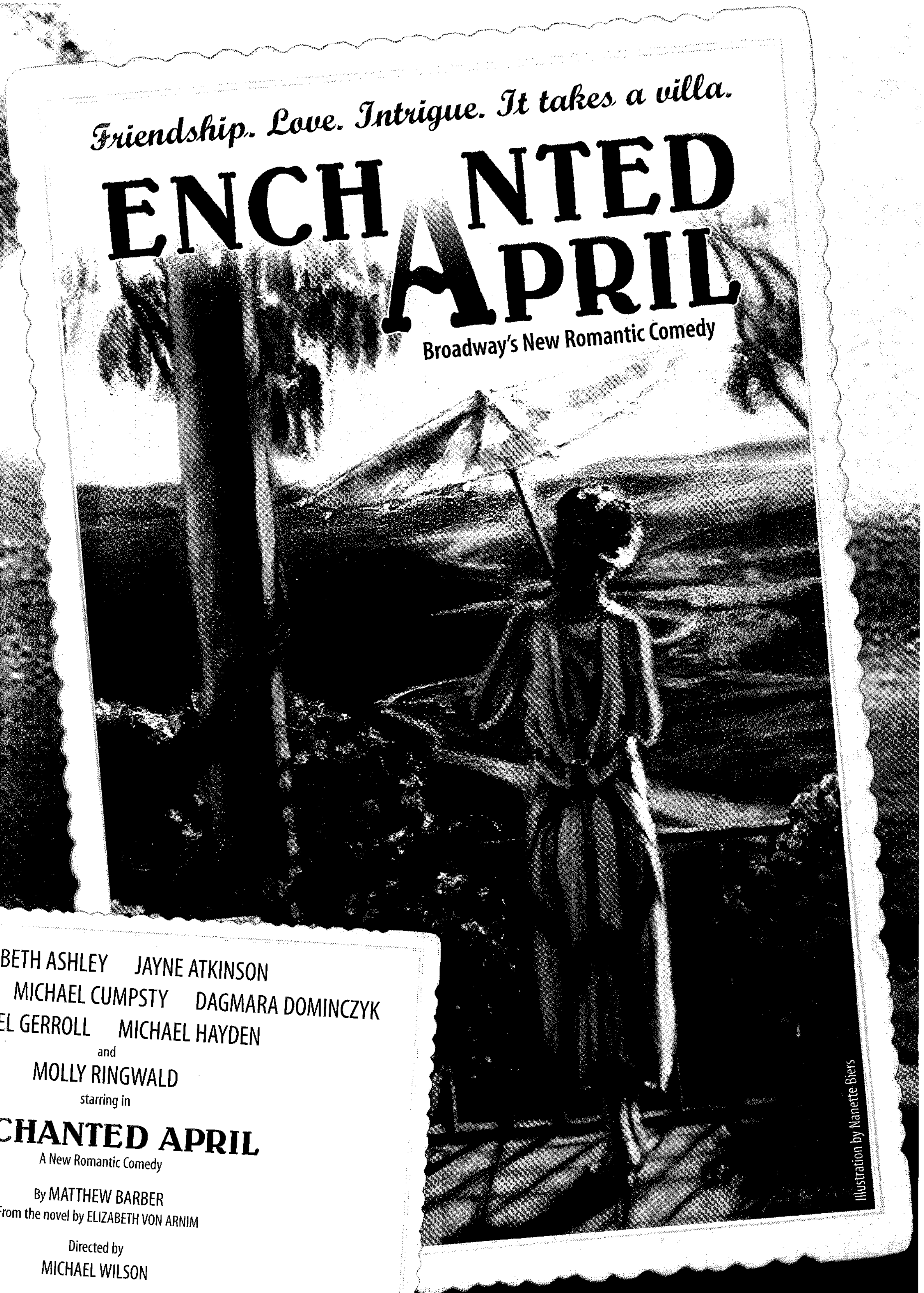
CARLYLE HOTEL
The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wraparound murals, and, through March 29, the vocalist **Jane Monheit.** On Mondays the café is home to **Woody Allen** and the **Eddie Davis New Orleans Jazz Band.** ♦ Across the hall, in Bemelmans Bar, **Loston Harris** is in attendance.

FEINSTEIN'S AT THE REGENCY
540 Park Ave., at 61st St. (212-339-4095)—Through March 29: The songwriter extraordinaire **Jimmy Webb** and the husband-and-wife vocalists **Marilyn McCoo** and **Billy Davis, Jr.,** go back a long way: in 1967, as members of the 5th Dimension, McCoo and Davis scored big with Webb's Grammy-winning "Up, Up and Away." Webb went on to greater glory as a writer, and has since evolved into a credible performer, while McCoo and Davis have retained their glamour.

IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (212-582-2121)—Through March 23: The **Bobby Hutcherson** sextet. It took Hutcherson to adapt the modernist grammar of sixties jazz to the vibraphone. He's at his best when he glides into the spare, mysterious ruminations he perfected on classics like Eric Dolphy's "Out to Lunch," but he also loves to display his piston-mallet technique on up-tempo chargers. Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.**

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—March 19-20: To his credit, the extravagantly gifted **Christian McBride** has never wholeheartedly accepted the role of top-dog mainstream-jazz bassist. His own groups reflect McBride's interest in fusion, funk, and avant-tinged jazz.

KNITTING FACTORY
74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (212-219-3055)—March 19-22: Stocked with new-jazz provocateurs, including the keyboardist Craig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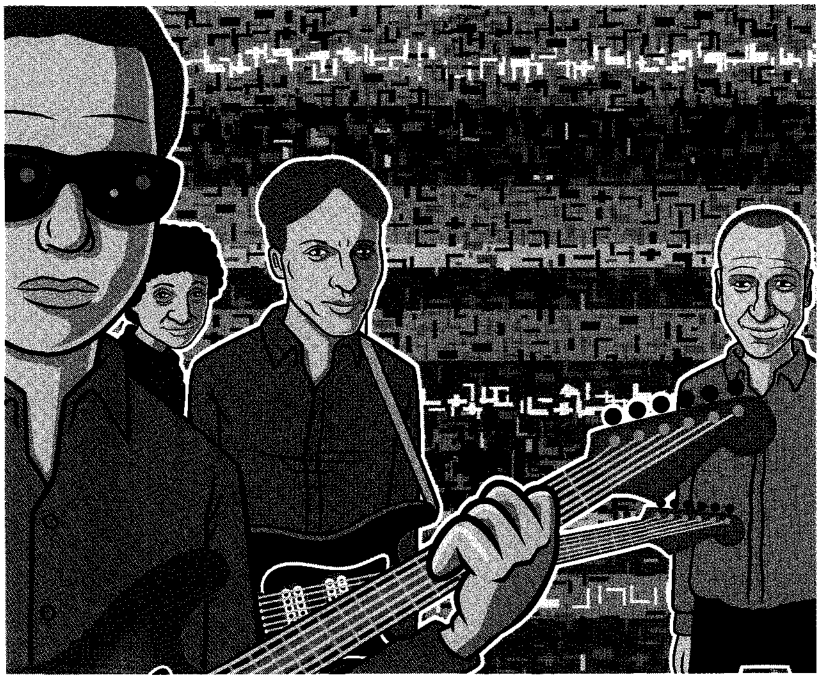
Taborn, the drummer Tom Rainey, and the guitarist Marc Ducret, the saxophonist Tim Berne's new band **Science Friction** won't tiptoe around. His groups typically speak a skewed language all their own, fractured yet lyrical, scrupulously formal yet edgy with vitality.

MAKOR
35 W. 67th St. (212-601-1000)—March 19: The **Howard Fishman** quartet. The self-taught guitarist and gravelly-voiced singer Fishman, a Connecticut native who spent his musically formative years in New Orleans, makes music that defies easy characterization. With his violinist Russell Farhang, he channels the hot jazz of Django Reinhardt and Stephane Grappelli. More recently, however, Fishman added a drummer to the group in the service of his nascent passion for contemporary rock.

TONIC
107 Norfolk St. (212-358-7503)—March 24: Dutch jazz musicians just wanna have fun; but the best of them also have the musical goods to back up their incessant wackiness. At the top of the heap are the legendary pianist **Misha Mengelberg** and the drummer **Han Bennink**, who, with the ICP (Instant Composers Pool) Orchestra, will revel in both mirth and heavy-duty improvisation.



Television brings its double-guitar sound to Irving Plaza (see Night Life—Clubs).

MICHAEL WELDON

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—Through March 23: The **Bill Charlap** trio is about as good as mainstream-piano jazz gets these days. Working with the bassist Peter Washington and the drummer Kenny Washington, the thirtysomething Charlap displays the poise and taste, and increasingly, the inner depth, of such grand stylists as Hank Jones and the late Tommy Flanagan. His devotion to melody, both composed and improvised, is rare, precious, and beautiful. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-879-5500)—**"Manet/Velázquez: The French Taste for Spanish Painting,"** a ravishing and keenly illuminating show, marshalls great paintings to demonstrate a miracle in art history: the rebirth of Spanish Baroque painting in nineteenth-century Paris, brought about by Édouard Manet. It was as electrifying a development in its way as the Renaissance rediscovery of antiquity. Manet's appropriation of Velázquez's crystalline, rhetorical realism transformed French painting and, beyond that, set an example of stylistic resourcefulness that has informed artistic innovation ever since. At one end of its two-century leap, the show is augmented with works by Zurbarán, Murillo, and other Spaniards, and, at the other, by relevant figures from Delacroix to Sargent. But the summit meeting of Velázquez and Manet dominates. Saying that this show is greater than the sum of its parts is saying a mouthful, since the parts give as much pleasure as a person can stand. Through June 8. ♦ With all the modern-art temples in New York, it's surprising that the mid-career retrospective of the German photographer Thomas Struth should land in the house of Dendur. On one hand, it's an obvious match: Struth is best known for exquisite large-scale portraits of stately museums thronged with visitors. But the show is an unexpected leap into the twenty-first century for the Met, which has also installed a pair of Struth's video portraits in the Great Hall. The main retrospective intermingles series of vacant city streets, intimate family portraits, lush green jungles, and museum scenes. Hanging in the inevitable retail nook at the end of the show, in what may be a curatorial dig at the recently shuttered Guggenheim branch in Las Vegas, is a stunning image of a pirate's cove at a casino. The second floor features a smaller exhibition, devoted exclusively to Struth's street photographs. Through May 18. ♦ **"Leonardo da Vinci, Master Draftsman"** surveys more than a hundred drawings by the Renaissance man. Through March 30. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART (MOMA QNS)
33rd St. at Queens Blvd., Long Island City (212-708-9400)—Even what's wrong with **"Matisse Picasso,"** the magnificent show that deploys a hundred and thirty-three works by the twin godheads of modern painting, is revelatory. It is a double-barrelled blast of an exhibition with a popgun thesis: that Picasso and Matisse goaded and influenced each other. So do most artistic contemporaries. In any case, trying to absorb fine curatorial points of comparison between such stunners as Picasso's "Les Demoiselles d'Avignon" and Matisse's "Bathers with a Turtle" is like trying to check the oil in a speeding truck. The show's payoff comes from the jagged, overwhelming sense it gives of how different the two were as men and artists—as antithetical, and evenly matched, as Ali and Frazier. Through May 19. (Open Thursdays, Sundays, and Mondays, 10 to 5, and Fridays and Saturdays, 10 to 9.)

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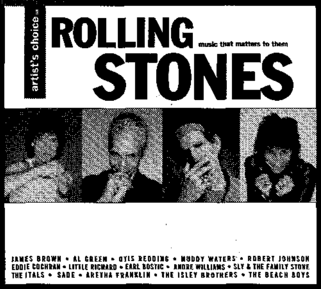
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GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—**"Matthew Barney: The Cremaster Cycle"** attempts an apotheosis of the artist. Frank Lloyd Wright's bobbin turns cornucopia, brimming with the fruits of Barney's epic nine-year "Cremaster" project: all five spectacular, recondite films projected amid outlandish objects, photographs, drawings, decorative elements such as flags and artificial turf, and, along the ramp, runnels of congealed Vaseline. It's all oddly, numbingly earnest. There's nothing fake about Barney. Would that there were. A touch of the charlatan (or of humor, God forbid) would prove that he cares what other people think. As it is, the show is seamlessly hermetic: a solipsist's houseparty. Barney's achievement appears to be a richly upholstered dead end. But to miss this landmark event is unthinkable. If not a major artist, he is certainly a major case. Through June 11. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (212-570-3676)—The twenty-six-year-old Ryan McGinley obsessively photographs the nights and days of his friends and lovers on the Lower East Side. Presented unframed and mounted in obligatory large format, the color pictures are so achingly hip that you have an urge to resist them, but their immediacy and zeal win out. There's nothing surreptitious about McGinley's gaze, and his portraits look more like collaboration than documentation, from the red-headed nymph who slyly eyes the camera as she's caught mid-leap to the man on the verge of orgasm who stares at the camera disconcertingly stone-faced. Through May 18. ♦ **"Scanning: The Aberrant Architectures of Diller + Scofidio,"** a retrospective featuring the designs of the husband-and-wife team. Through May 25. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6; Fridays, 1 to 9.)

SCANDINAVIA HOUSE
58 Park Ave., at 38th St. (212-879-9779)—In 1814, when the Norwegian constitution was adopted, Article Two, or the "Jewish clause," forbade Jewish immigration into Norway. The poet Henrik Wergeland found the measure preposterous and spearheaded a campaign against it. Its repeal opened Norway's borders in 1851, six years after Wergeland's death, and saved many Jews from pogroms in Eastern Europe. **"Jewish Life and Culture in Norway: Wergeland's Legacy"** brings together photographs and personal and religious artifacts from the small, proud immigrant communities that flourished in Norway between the repeal and Hitler's occupation. Through March 22. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, noon to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.

PAUL GEORGES / GREGORY GILLESPIE
Georges, who died last year at seventy-nine, was a typical big-brush, big-ego painter, a sort of missing link between Fairfield Porter and Julian Schnabel. His last still-lifes and interiors are as jaunty and brawny as ever, despite—or maybe because of?—the naked angels peering down from the blue rectangle of the studio skylight. Gillespie, who committed suicide in 2000, was the opposite of Georges. Both liked to talk to interviewers about freedom, but to Gillespie that meant the freedom to coax miniature phantasmagorias to life with triple-zero brushes. This sampling gives a sense of his weirdness but not of his genius. Both shows through March 29. (Salander O'Reilly, 20 E. 79th St. 212-879-6606.)

JULIE HEFFERNAN
Best known for portraying herself as a Velázquez princess in overripe wildernesses of her own imagination, Heffernan has gradually shorn away her borrowed tresses. When the artist appears in these paintings, she's a skinny nude redhead, ill at ease in her fantastical surroundings. When she doesn't appear, Heffernan's flair for descriptive opulence takes over, and the pictures teem with glistening birds, lizards, and berries. Through April 19. (Littlejohn, 41 E. 57th St. 212-980-2323.)

BILL JENSEN
The true-blue modernist has a tendency to stall and then lurch forward; you can see both modes here. A group of layered gestural canvases called "Images of a Floating World" have a semi-resistible prettiness that's echt Jensen. You get a pesky feeling that the artist is trying to outpaint Brice Marden and Gerhard Richter in his abstract mode by fusing them. "Howl" and "Locus," on the other hand, offer something new. Their forms are more specific (strange grapelike clusters, a weird hump shooting rays of light), and the execution is faster, almost instantaneous. They feel exclamatory and impatient. Through April 26. (Mary Boone, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 212-752-2929.)

ANTONI TÀPIES
Is there a twentysomething artist in Manhattan with the feistiness of this Catalonian octogenarian? His work is graffiti-like in its speed and impudence. Broken furniture, scrawled words and arrows, monster faces and crosses: from these childish or punkish elements, Tàpies makes sombre, laconic icons. One features a fetal Minotaur; another a Magritte-like arrangement of teacups. Most seem less like pictures and more like messages of some perverse kind, jotted by an artist with a casual—but prodigious—graphic knack. Through March 29. (Pace Wildenstein, 32 E. 57th St. 212-421-3292.)

Short List

DIANA HOROWITZ / JOSEF ALBERS
Hirschl & Adler, 21 E. 70th St. 212-535-8810. Through March 22.

ROBERT INDIANA
C&M Arts, 45 E. 78th St. 212-861-0020. Through March 29.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

MICHAEL JOAQUIN GREY
The works in this show, which come mostly from the early nineties, look like science experiments conducted for aesthetes—not surprising given the artist's dual training in genetics and sculpture. Older viewers may remember Grey as one of a pack of Yale sculptors—along with Matthew Barney, Michael Joo, and Keith Edmier—who sprang on the scene in the early nineties. Younger viewers will remember him as the inventor of Zoobs, a biomorphic version of Legos. Tiered shelves support panes of Plexiglas with cellular imagery (like giant microscope slides), including a striking series of black and blue flagella that suggest microcosmic Muybridge locomotion studies. Through March 29. (Bitforms, 529 W. 21st St. 212-366-6939.)

DAVE MULLER
In the mid-nineties Muller made a name for himself by inviting folks to participate in short-term roving exhibitions called Three Day Weekends. The same collegial atmosphere infuses this freewheeling show of sculpture and works on paper, some of which reproduce invitations to other artists' shows, both real and imagined. In one (fictional and pointedly irreverent) poster for Gagosian's (real) show of Warhol oxidation paintings (or "piss paintings"), Muller has Calvin of "Calvin and Hobbes" fame executing Warhol's influential oxidation technique. Through April 5. (Murray Guy, 453 W. 17th St. 212-463-7372.)

RACHEL WHITEREAD
The British sculptor stays true to her gimmick (casting negative spaces from the world) by presenting the solid form of a stairway and the rooms at its top and bottom. This colossal object, an off-white apparition in plaster-coated fibreglass, is eerie and extremely grand. Also in the show is a positive cast, in aluminum squares, of a dilapidated tile floor—an obvious riff on Carl Andre,

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ROBERT COLESCOTT
The old hipster Expressionist (he's seventy-seven now) shows more juicy, hotly colorful paintings that make high comedy of sensual and racial themes, with a difference. Colescott's always bravura paint-handling has been set free from cartoony designs, attaining a lush, skittery, entirely assured lyricism that stands up to de Kooning's. Images of African totems and loving couples come and go like illusions in summer clouds. Memorable colors include sizzling red, loamy black, and the noncolor of blank canvas, which Colescott employs with newfound dynamism. Through April 5. (Kind, 136 Greene St. 212-925-1200.)

Short List

CLAUDIA SCHMACKE
Plane Space, 102 Charles St. 917-606-1268. Through March 23.

GALLERIES—BROOKLYN

SHIH CHIEH HUANG
"S-67-03," described as a "kinetic cause-and-effect system that interacts with the viewer," is a techie bricoleur's glowing, beeping fairyland of chemistry-set parts and jury-rigged gadgetry. A music-box soundtrack and a blinking overhead light set the scene for Huang's intricate webbing of colored electrical cords and clear hoses full of fluorescent fluids, which bubble and whirr erratically in response to movement around the gallery. Pour a cup of glowing liquid into the funnel by the door, and the machine yields the sort of noises that suggest the machine has a G-spot, if not a mortal soul. Through March 23. (Sixtyseven, 67 Metropolitan Ave., Brooklyn. 718-486-0387.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

SAUL FLETCHER
Byronic romance meets existential angst in photographs whose psychological intensity comes as something of a surprise given their size (the largest is five and a half inches high) and subject matter (still-lifes of lace doilies and dried flowers, albeit thorny ones, abound). One wall is devoted to a series of black-and-white landscapes, fallow fields under brooding skies that suggest a collaboration between Carleton Watkins and Camus. The painted backdrops in the still-lifes recall the scumbling of Cy Twombly, with whom Fletcher shares a flair for hermetic poetry. Through March 29. (Kern, 532 W. 20th St. 212-367-9663.)
INGAR KRAUSS
This Berlin-based photographer has tapped into that slightly surreal time in adolescence so controversially mined by the likes of Sally Mann and Jock Sturges, but without Mann's sense of intimate familiarity or Sturges's naked majesty. Krauss's German and Russian kids are clothed, more or less, and photographed in black-and-white; they seem

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Manet / Velázquez
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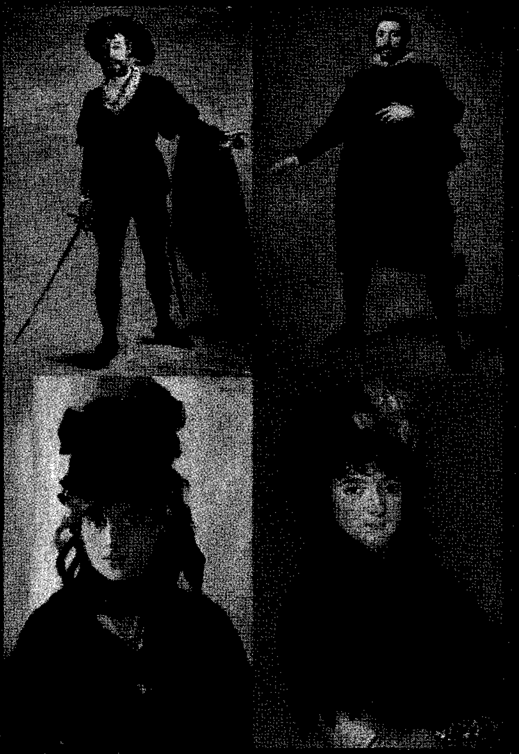

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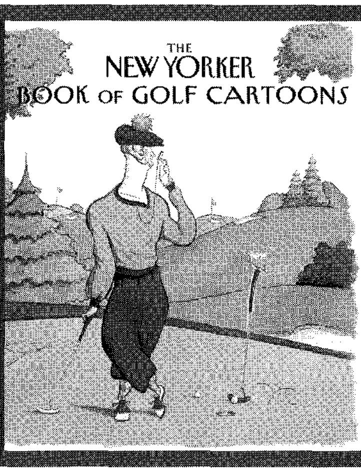
The exhibition was organized by The Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Réunion des Musées Nationaux/Musée d'Orsay.
An indemnity has been granted by the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities.
Clockwise from top left (details): Édouard Manet, *Faure in the Role of Hamlet*, 1876-77, Museum Folkwang Essen; Diego Rodríguez de Silva y Velázquez, *The Jester Pablo de Valladolid*, ca. 1632-35, Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid; Francisco de Goya y Lucientes and/or studio, *Woman in a Spanish Costume*, ca. 1797-98, Musée du Louvre, Paris, Bequest of Louis Guillemardet, 1865; and Édouard Manet, *Berthe Morisot with a Bunch of Violets*, 1872, Musée d'Orsay, Paris.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both entirely aware of the camera and resistant to easy interpretation. One girl in a party dress strolls through the woods using a bunch of balloons to obscure her face; another, in a leotard, mascara, and a tight bun of hair, boldly stares Krauss down. She might as well be daring Krauss to ask her how old she really is or if she's having any fun at all. Through March 22. (Marvelli, 526 W. 26th St. 212-627-3363.)

RALPH EUGENE MEATYARD
In a cheap plastic snaggletoothed mask, the character played by Meatyard's wife in this series of odd, poignant, and ahead-of-their-time portraits is joined by friends and her children in other masks to fill "The Family Album of Lucybelle Crater." Recalling Diane Arbus's tranquil eye and Emmet Gowin's early family photographs—and presaging Cindy Sherman's personae—the "Album," assembled in the early seventies, is being shown whole for the first time in New York. Purposefully misleading captions, such as "Lucybelle Crater and 20 yr old son's legless wife Lucybelle Crater," which describes Lucybelle and a young woman standing in front of a hedge, add to the vertiginous sense of family. Meatyard, who was a Kentucky-based optician before turning to photography, gives the sense in these wonderfully weird, personal documents that he truly saw through the masks and into his subjects' souls. Through April 19. (Pace/MacGill, 534 W. 25th St. 212-929-7000.)

JAN STALLER
The massive, man-made found sculptures in Staller's new large-scale color photographs are so aggressively physical that they sometimes appear to be straining against the edges of the frame. In "Silage" an obese, lumpy snake of fabric-wrapped fodder crushes the grass beneath a broad gray sky. The effect is both menacing and oddly titillating, like an elaborate package you can't help but unwrap, even though you're aware that it houses a nasty surprise. Many of the objects are graceful despite their immobility. In "Ribbon Drawing—Korea," a twirled length of industrial ribbon jetés across a plot of dark, crumbly soil, and in "Tyvek Spools," a long bank of enormous spools trail silky-looking threads. They're as syncopated and graceful as a troupe of cancan dancers. Through March 29. (Klotz/Sirmon, 511 W. 25th St. 212-741-4764.)

DAVID STEWART
In the imagistic shorthand employed by so many contemporary photographers, children symbolize misplaced sexuality (if not downright deviance), and the elderly (often the photographer's beleaguered parents) represent hopelessness, resentment, and ruined dreams. But there's no such dourness in David Stewart's exuberant celebration of old farts, which could be a collection of giant stills from some fantastic independent British film about eccentric, fun-loving geriatrics. In "Game Boys," two codgers in three-piece suits play video games, the floor littered with cheese curls, their faces rapt. They reappear, with a third man, in "Six Feet Under," wearing birthday hats and dangling their feet into an open grave; everyone looks pretty relaxed, actually. The photos, which were printed using a painstaking process called Carbro, are jewel-toned and energetic, and make old age look like a Technicolor destination you wouldn't mind visiting sometime soon. Through March 31. (In Camera, 511 W. 25th St. 212-647-7667.)

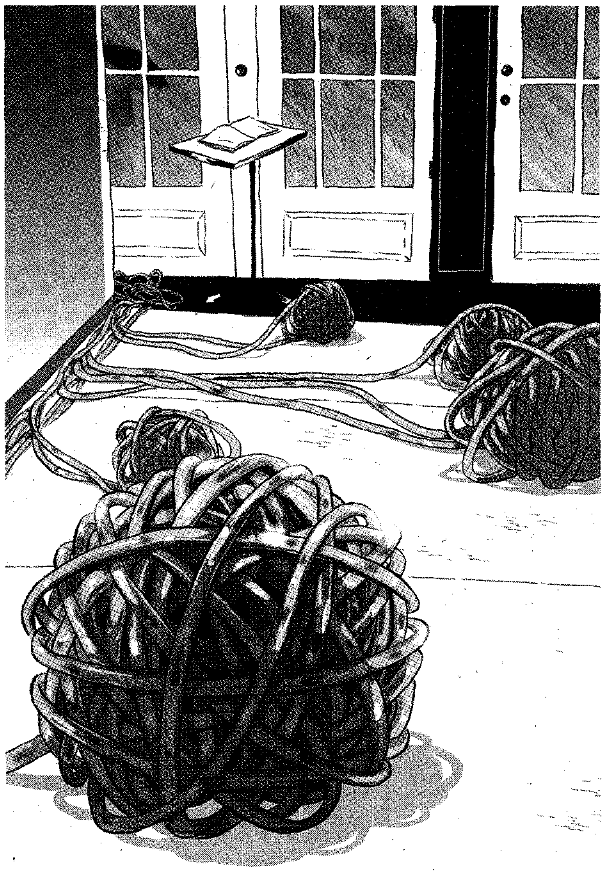
Short List

GAIL ALBERT-HALABAN
Meyerowitz, 120 Eleventh Ave. 212-414-2770.
Through April 12.

LYNN DAVIS
Houk, 745 Fifth Ave. 212-750-7070.
Through May 3.

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

CHRISTIE'S
March 19 at 2 and 5: A sale of wine, featuring vintages from Pétrus and Romanée-Conti. ♦ March 24 at 1:30: Christie's kicks off the March madness known as Asian Week with an auction of paintings, ceramics, bronzes, and other art works from Japan and Korea. Highlights of the Japanese sale include a pair of six-panel screens representing the twelve months by Uemura Shoen and a pair of matching lacquer writing and stationery boxes from the Edo period. ♦ March 24 at approximately 4: Korean art works and objects. A Punch'ong stoneware bottle from the Choson period (expected to bring more than half a million dollars) is a highlight of the sale. ♦ March 25 at 10 A.M. and 2: A collection of Japanese prints—featuring such iconic images as Hiroshige's "Fireworks, Ryogoku"—goes on sale. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.)



An installation by Claudia Schmacke at Plane Space.

SWANN
March 20 at 10:30 A.M.: Part I of the Henry Polissack library of books on gems and jewelry. A 1516 second edition of Camillus Leonardus' "Speculum Lapidum," an extremely rare early work on gems (expected to bring up to fifteen thousand dollars), leads a sale of more than three hundred items. (104 E. 25th St. 212-254-4710.)

ANTIQUORUM
March 19 at 2: A sale of pocket watches, wristwatches, and clocks. (Grand Havana Room, 666 Fifth Ave., at 52nd St. 212-750-1103.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA
Valery Gergiev, who led the first performances of Elijah Moshinsky's 1994 production of **"Otello,"** sets the tone for this very Russian revival, rough around
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tain high notes;
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places Kallen Esperia
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"Les Troyens," with John
neas), Deborah Voigt, and Mic
leading roles; James Levine cond
6:30.) ♦ With Sue Patchell replacing
Heppner returning to the role of Aenea
at 6:30.) ♦ Harold Prince's 1990 pro
Gounod's **"Faust"** has lost none of its asto
ugliness in this refurbished revival,
you'll have a glorious time if you lim
your attention to Roberto Alagna and Angela Gheorghiu, who transcend the frequent puffs of stage smoke and bring real fire to the fatal attraction between the deluded philosopher and the damsel who crosses his path. James Morris is a gruff and charmless Méphistophélès (how does the boyishly attractive Alagna put up with him for so long?). The Met orchestra, conducted by Bertrand de Billy, wallows happily in Gounod's elegant gooeyness. This week's first performance features Emily Pulley and Marcus Haddock as Marguerite and Faust. (March 21 and March 25 at 8.) ♦ Elijah Moshinsky's triumphant 2001 production of **"Nabucco"** returns with Andrea Gruber, Francisco Casanova, Samuel Ramey, Frederick Burchinal, and the magnificent Met chorus; James Levine conducts. (March 22 at 8.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000.)

NEW YORK CITY OPERA
Scott Ellis's 1991 opera-house version of **"A Little Night Music"** takes flight with a cast that brings the show triumphantly back to its theatrical roots. A crew of big-voiced Broadway pros (including Marc Kudisch and Kristin Huxhold) gives Stephen Sondheim's most rapturously lyrical score its full due, while three consummate actors (Juliet Stevenson, Claire Bloom, and Jeremy Irons, who all sing *just* well enough) revel in the stinging subtleties of Hugh Wheeler's book. Michele Pawk, whose Countess Malcolm drips with acid wit, balances both tasks to perfection. Paul Gemignani conducts. (March 19 and March 21-22 at 8.) ♦ **"Carmen,"** with Katharine Goeldner (in the title role), Nicolle Foland, Carl Tanner, and Paulo Szot; Joseph Rescigno. (March 20 at 7:30 and March 22 at 1:30.) ♦ The New York première of Mark Adamo's **"Little Women,"** an affecting adaptation of the Louisa May Alcott classic, with Jennifer Dudley (repeating her Glimmerglass Opera star turn as the headstrong Jo), Caroline Worra, Chad Shelton, and Charles Robert Stephens; George Manahan. (March 23 at 1:30.) (New York State Theatre. 212-307-4100.)

VIKTOR ULLMANN'S
"THE EMPEROR OF ATLANTIS"
In the first of three concert events, the conductor James Conlon honors the achievements of the composers who perished in the Nazi camps, leading the Juilliard Orchestra and a student cast in a semistaged performance of Ullmann's allegorical masterpiece. (Central Synagogue, Lexington Ave. at 55th St. March 23 at 7:30. For information about tickets, call 212-415-5500.)

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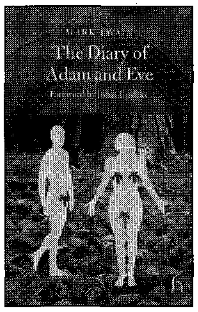

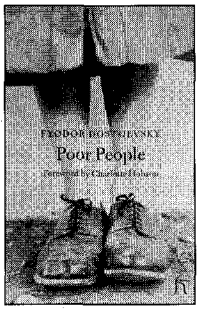

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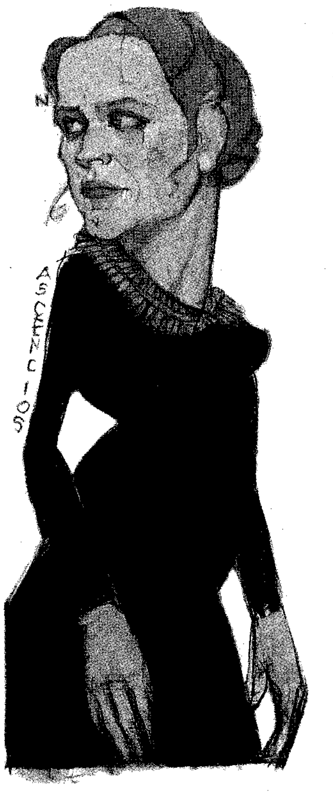
his favorite people. He kicks off his seven-program series by leading the first Philharmonic performances of Bernstein's raucous "political overture," "Slava!," and—dovetailing nicely with the "Sounds French" festival—Dutilleux's ethereal Van Gogh tribute "Timbres, Espaces, Mouvement: La Nuit Etoilée," in addition to conducting music by Lutoslawski and Prokofiev (the Piano Concerto No. 3, featuring the young Ukrainian pianist Konstantin Lifschitz, in his Philharmonic début). (March 20 at 7:30 and March 21-22 at 8.) ♦ Rostropovich picks up his cello to join Lifschitz, the violinist Maxim Vengerov, and several Philharmonic musicians in a chamber concert of music by Prokofiev and Shostakovich (the Piano Trio No. 2). (March 23 at 7.) ♦ Rostropovich conducts the Bernstein, Lutoslawski, and Dutilleux works along with Prokofiev's Piano Concerto No. 2 (with Evgeny Kissin as special guest). (March 25-26 at 7:30.) (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5656.)



The mezzo-soprano Jennifer Dudley stars in the New York première of "Little Women" at City Opera on March 23.

"SOUNDS FRENCH"
The organist Olivier Latry takes the spotlight in a concert with the Choir and Orchestra of the Church of St. Ignatius Loyola that features not only classics by Duruflé and Messiaen (the "Trois Petites Liturgies") but also the American première of Thierry Escaich's Concerto for Organ and Orchestra. Kent Tritle and Aaron Smith conduct. (Park Ave. at 84th St. 212-288-2520. March 19 at 8.)

EOS ORCHESTRA:
"IN MAHLER'S SHADOW"
Schoenberg (as well as Webern, Berg, and Erwin Stein) made chamber versions of Mahler's great orchestral works amidst the economic scarcity of post-First World War Vienna, but recent years have seen them taken up by a number of enterprising conductor-impresarios. One is Jonathan Sheffer, who leads his ensemble in two mostly Mahler concerts. March 20 at 8: The soprano Anna Christy and the baritone Kurt Ollmann participate in a program that features arrangements of Mahler's "Songs of a Wayfarer" (by Schoenberg) and Symphony No. 4 (in Alexander Platt's 1991 realization of Stein's long-lost arrangement). ♦ March 22 at 8: Three more Schoenberg arrangements, including "Das Lied von der Erde" (with the singers Michael Hendrick and Andrew Schroeder) and Debussy's "Prélude à l'Après-midi d'un Faune." (Ethical Culture Society Concert Hall, 2 W. 64th St. 212-691-6415.)

GOTHAM CITY ORCHESTRA:
BACH'S MASS IN B MINOR
George Steel conducts two performances of Bach's magnum opus, featuring the Vox Vocal Ensemble, the soprano Sari Gruber, the baritone Philip Cutlip, and other singers. (St. Paul's Chapel, Columbia University, Amsterdam Ave. at 117th St. 212-854-7799. March 21-22 at 8.)

ENSEMBLE INTERCONTEMPORAIN
Pierre Boulez—for better or worse—made himself the central figure of postwar French music by taking the classic Gallic *mariage* of the cerebral and the sensuous to a fabulous extreme. The "Sounds French" festival celebrates his legacy with two Carnegie Hall concerts of essential works, performed by the renowned group that the composer founded in 1976. March 22 at 8: "Répons" (1981) may not really be the "groundbreaking" work his promoters claim—the genre of "live electronic music," in which performers' acoustic sounds are transformed and added to the concert mix in real time, was pioneered by more original minds in the nineteen-sixties. But Carnegie Hall takes "Répons" seriously indeed, reconfiguring the auditorium to fit its requisite platforms of massed electronic gear. The concert begins with a performance of the more intimate "Anthèmes II." ♦ March 23 at 3: A concert of smaller works for performers and electronics, including "Dérives I" and "Dérives II" (both offshoots of "Répons"). (212-247-7800.)

"JOHN ADAMS: AN AMERICAN MASTER"
Adams, the most popular orchestral composer in the United States, has won his acclaim the hard way—by crossing the rhythmic techniques of minimalism with the grand symphonic designs of the masters, creating a style that generates new pleasures and challenges with each successive piece. Lincoln Center celebrates his music with a series of ten events. March 20 and March 22 at 7:30: Great Performers, in a cross-borough collaboration with BAM, presents the New York première of Adams's "El Niño," his wondrous and beguiling take on the Baroque Nativity oratorio, featuring the vocal stars of the Nonesuch recording (Dawn Upshaw, Lorraine Hunt Lieberson, and Willard White) along with Esa-Pekka Salonen conducting the Los Angeles Philharmonic and the Los Angeles Master Chorale. (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 718-636-4100.) ♦ March 24 at 8: Salonen and his orchestra move to Avery Fisher Hall to perform "Naïve and Sentimental Music," Adams's arresting symphonic meditation on Schiller's theory of artistic creation, on a program that begins with a modernist scorcher, Bartók's suite from "The Miraculous Mandarin." (212-721-6500.)

LOS ANGELES PHILHARMONIC
Esa-Pekka Salonen and his orchestra perform an additional concert of Ravel, Strauss (the "Four Last Songs," with Karita Mattila), and Lutoslawski. (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-721-6500. March 23 at 3.)

RECITALS

BARGEMUSIC
March 20-21 at 7:30: An all-Chopin program (including the Préludes, Op. 28) offered by the pianist Quynh Nguyen, making her début at the barge. ♦ March 22 at 7:30 and March 23 at 4: Mozart's last three string quartets, performed by an ensemble that includes the violinist Jonathan Gandelsman and the cellist Judith McIntyre. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083.)

"SCHOENBERG IN L.A."
March 20 at 7:30: Southwest Chamber Music makes its New York début with a concert devoted to the composer's late chamber works, including the String Quartet No. 4 and "Ode to Napoleon." ♦ March 21 at 7:30: More Schoenberg, including "Pierrot Lunaire" (with the soprano Phyllis Bryn-Julson). (Great Hall, Cooper Union, Third Ave. at 7th St. 212-279-4200.)

MIKHAIL PLETNEV
The commanding Russian pianist makes his début at the Metropolitan Museum with a program of Mussorgsky ("Pictures at an Exhibition") and Tchaikovsky (the rarely performed, and notoriously recalcitrant, Sonata in G Major). (Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. 212-570-3949. March 20 at 8.)

NEW YORK PHILOMUSICA
Joseph Rabbai, the Met Orchestra's principal clarinettist, is the featured player in a program of works by Bach, Shostakovich, Saint-Saëns (the charming Clarinet Sonata), and Hindemith. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 212-580-9933. March 20 at 8.)

N. ASCENCIOS

CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY OF LINCOLN CENTER: "ROMANTIC EVOLUTIONS"
In the midst of an enticingly unpredictable season, the Society's members and guests (including the flutist Ransom Wilson and the violinist Joseph Silverstein) pause for a spell in a pleasant Romantic backwater, performing a program of Chopin, Hummel (the Septet in D Minor), and Beethoven. (Alice Tully Hall. 212-875-5788. March 23 at 5 and March 25 at 7:30.)

"SOUNDS FRENCH" KEYBOARD CONCERTS
March 21 at 8: Thierry Escaich performs organ music by Franck, Dupré, Tournemire, and himself. (Church of St. Ignatius Loyola, Park Ave. at 84th St. 212-288-2520.) ♦ March 25 at 7: The pianist Roger Muraro offers a complete performance of Messiaen's "Catalogue d'Oiseaux," the composer's ultimate tribute to the sounds of his many feathered friends. (Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. 212-355-6160.)

GARRICK OHLSSON: "BUSONI AT THE KEYBOARD"
Ohlsson—a big guy whose clearheaded curiosity is matched with an effortless, athletic technique—concludes his series of Bach-Busoni-Liszt concerts with a program of landmark works: the Contrapuncti from "The Art of Fugue," the "Fantasia Contrappuntistica," and the Sonata in B Minor. (Alice Tully Hall. 212-721-6500. March 23 at 2.)

MUSIC BY EZEQUIEL VIÑAO
Kristjan Järvi's ultrahip ensemble Absolute (along with the violinist Anne Akiko Meyers and the pianist Joseph Kalichstein) performs the world première of "Saga," a computer-enhanced Icelandic fantasy by the up-and-coming Argentinean composer. (Miller Theatre, Broadway at 116th St. 212-854-7799. March 25 at 8.)

ELEMENTS STRING QUARTET
The feisty young quartet (with the baritone Jubilant Sykes) offers a program featuring music by David Del Tredici, Chen Yi, Dvořák (the "American" Quartet), Bach, and Nat King Cole. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 212-501-3330. March 24 at 8.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

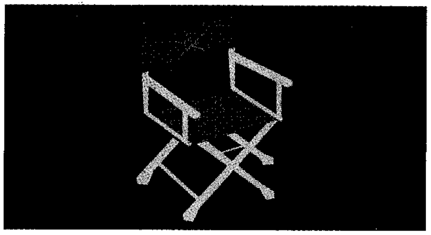
READINGS
March 19 at 8: Alice Walker reads from her new collection of poems, "Absolute Trust in the Goodness of the Earth." (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500.) ♦ March 20 at 10:30: Ken Waldman, a poet-musician from Alaska, will read, sing, and play the fiddle in support of his latest CD, "Music Party." (Bowery Poetry Club, 308 Bowery. 212-614-0505.) ♦ March 23 at 7: Martin Roper and ZZ Packer read from their fiction. (K.G.B., 85 E. 4th St. No tickets necessary.) ♦ March 24 at 8: Pete Hamill reads from his new novel, "Forever." (Rocky Sullivan's, Lexington Ave. between 28th and 29th Sts. No tickets necessary.)

TALKS
March 19 at 6:30: The history professor Veena Oldenburg discusses British colonial influence on dowry murders in India. (Asia Society, Park Ave. at 70th St. For reservations, which are required, call 212-517-2742.) ♦ March 24 at 7: Editors from several independent presses talk about the state of literature and publishing in the African-American community. The writers Carl Hancock Rux, Deborah Drisana Jack, and Mirlande Jean-Gilles will be on hand to read from upcoming publications, and Jeffrey Lependorf, executive director of the Council of Literary Magazines and Presses, is the moderator. (Studio Museum in Harlem, 144 W. 125th St. For more information, call 212-741-9110.) ♦ March 25 at 6:30: The Japanese stage director and playwright Satoshi Miyagi talks with the theatre critic John Bell about contemporary theatre in Japan. A demonstration performance of Miyagi's unique style—inspired by eighteenth-century Bunraku puppet theatre—follows. (Graduate Center, City University of New York, Fifth Ave. at 34th St. For more information, call 212-817-8215.)

BOOK CURRENTS

Black and White and Red All Over

In a scene straight out of a screwball comedy, Norma Barzman shoved a pie in her future husband's face on the day they met. In **THE RED AND THE BLACKLIST** (Thunder's Mouth), Barzman recounts other zany moments among Communist-sympathizer screenwriters during the time of the blacklist. A young Norma Jean Baker tips off Barzman and her husband to police surveillance. They dodge subpoenas by swapping houses with another couple; later they find that a rented house in France is filled with hoarded Nazi gold. Even their political beliefs have a Hollywood glow: Barzman writes, "Communist couples had a romantic notion of themselves as the ideal young man and young woman surging forward with the Red flag, the logo of Artkino (Soviet films)."



STEPHEN SAVAGE

Richard Schickel's childhood in Wauwatosa, Wisconsin, was never so glamorous, but in **GOOD MORNING, MR. ZIP ZIP ZIP** (Ivan R. Dee), he recalls the many movies written by the soon-to-be-blacklisted that offered romanticized visions of American and Russian societies during the Second World War. "You can't really tell the difference between those written by Communists and those written by liberals," Schickel notes. "All you can say of this lot is that if their political sins were minimal, their rhetorical ones were heinous."

Hollywood in the fifties was filled with sinners: as Sam Kashner and Jennifer MacNair recount in **THE BAD AND THE BEAUTIFUL** (W. W. Norton), those in the entertainment industry survived everything from sex scandals to murder cases. Yet some, like the screenwriter Alvah Bessie, never recovered from political persecution: "People say it's now pretty fashionable to say you were blacklisted, but if that's fashionable, I haven't gotten any offers from Hollywood yet," he told an interviewer in 1977.

—*Andrea Thompson*

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THIS WEEK'S WEB EXCLUSIVE:
A CONVERSATION ABOUT "THE HOURS," WITH MICHAEL CUNNINGHAM, STEPHEN DALDRY, DAVID HARE, & DAVID DENBY

PLUS:
Joan Acocella
Judith Thurman
Malcolm Gladwell
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Jonathan Franzen
Galway Kinnell
Rebecca Mead
Gilles Peress
Jeffrey Toobin
Edna O'Brien
Maira Kalman
and more

AND: A calendar of *New Yorker* events across the country

MOVIES OPENING

DECASIA
Bill Morrison's experimental feature, in which he set decaying film footage to a symphonic score. Opening March 19. (Anthology Film Archives.)

DREAMCATCHER
An adaptation of Stephen King's novel about an alien event that occurs while four friends are staying in a Maine hunting cabin. Lawrence Kasdan directed. The cast includes Morgan Freeman, Tom Sizemore, Jason Lee, Damian Lewis, and Donnie Wahlberg. Opening March 21.

FULLTIME KILLER
An assassin (Andy Lau) sets out to kill a reclusive and legendary master assassin (Takashi Sorimachi), in a Hong Kong action film directed by Johnnie To. In Cantonese. Opening March 21. (Cinema Village.)

GAUDI AFTERNOON
A gender-bending mystery directed by Susan Seidelman, in which an American (Judy Davis) in Barcelona gets drawn into a missing-person case. With Marcia Gay Harden and Juliette Lewis. Opening March 21. (Quad Cinema.)

THE GIRL FROM PARIS
A bankrupt farmer (Michel Serrault) sells his land to a young urbanite (Mathilde Seigner) who dreams of the rural life, in a romantic drama directed by Christian Carion. In French. Opening March 21. (Paris.)

JAPÓN
A début film from the writer-director Carlos Reygadas, about a middle-aged Mexican man contemplating suicide. Set in the canyon country of Hidalgo. In Spanish. Opening March 19. (Film Forum.)

VIEW FROM THE TOP
Gwyneth Paltrow plays a small-town girl who dreams of becoming a first-class international flight attendant, in a comedy directed by Bruno Barreto. The cast includes Christina Applegate, Mike Myers, and Candice Bergen. Opening March 21.

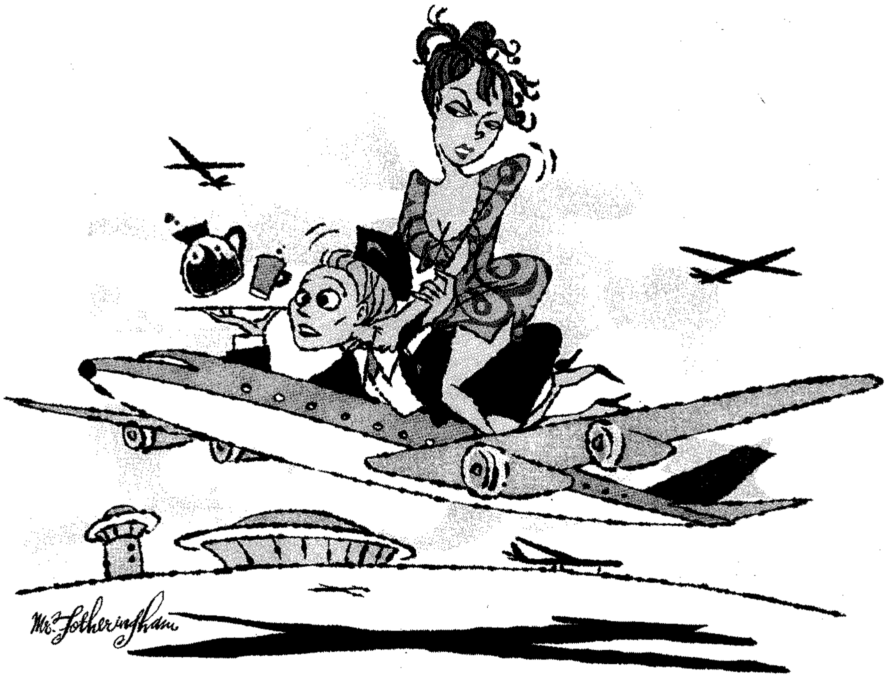
FILM NOTES

ALL THE REAL GIRLS
For his follow-up to "George Washington," the young director David Gordon Green has turned his gaze upon a quiet mill town in North Carolina. You can tell the place is quiet because Paul (Paul Schneider) enjoys a reputation as its most carousing and cavalier stud. In fact, Paul is a nondescript time-waster of twenty-two, a blunt boy whose best friend is really his mother (Patricia Clarkson). Having tasted and discarded half the local womenfolk, Paul is nonplussed when he finds himself falling for, and then two-timed by, Noel (Zooey Deschanel). Green presents this as an education of the heart, a lyrical act of persuasion that is backed up by random shots of sunsets and tumbling creeks. To the rest of us, it looks like comeuppance. Why the sweetly unreadable Noel should hang around the place a minute longer is anybody's guess.—*Anthony Lane* (Reviewed in our issue of 2/17 & 24/03.) (Angelika Film Center and Kew Gardens Cinema.)

BRINGING DOWN THE HOUSE
The joy of seeing Queen Latifah in a new film is muted by the general lameness of this would-be ghetto-fabulous comedy. The setup has the Queen as an escaped convict, moving in with an uptight lawyer (Steve Martin) whom she tries to convince of her innocence. The script and Adam Shankman's shameless direction seem to belong to a torpid "Saturday Night Live" sketch—Martin's character receives a predictable hip-hop facelift, and his shufflin'-gangsta performance offers nothing new. Only Eugene Levy, who plays a lawyer colleague in awe of Latifah's bodaciousness, arouses any comic interest.—*Bruce Diones* (Battery Park 16, Cinema I, 84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

CHICAGO
The time is the nineteen-twenties, but the setting is so stylized, so shamelessly grounded in a hundred other

shows and films, that "Chicago" barely qualifies as a period piece; indeed, it merrily jabs at the celebrity-lust of our own era. Catherine Zeta-Jones is Velma Kelly, and Renée Zellweger is Roxie Hart. Each is a man-killer, and each resides in jail, plotting her defense with the silken legal help of Billy Flynn (Richard Gere). The music and lyrics by Kander and Ebb operate on the old-fashioned principle that every song should be a showstopper, regardless of whether the show should be stopped. The director, Rob Marshall, cuts away furiously during every song, and this chronic wish to glance aside makes us wonder: could the performers not weather the camera's unstinting gaze? The only player to conquer the movie is Zeta-Jones, who gets by on a full tank of unleaded oomph. The film has punch, but it never really conveys the delicious, redeeming sense that life can be lived on the hoof.—*A.L.* (1/6/03) (Battery Park 16, Chelsea West, Cinema 2, 84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, Union Square, and Ziegfeld.)



Gwyneth Paltrow and Christina Applegate in "View from the Top."

EDWIN FOTHERINGHAM

CITY OF GOD
Just how far into your face can a movie get? This one has every intention of leaving you scalded and bruised. Set in Rio de Janeiro, it was directed by Fernando Meirelles, who tries every trick known to cameramen: freeze frames, whip pans, multiple dissolves, slow motion, double motion, any kind of motion. The object is to keep pace with his characters, the young and dispossessed of the Brazilian slums. The movie hastens roughly from the nineteen-sixties to the eighties, as we watch the boys either die or grow old before their time. The result is a jolting ride, but such is the skill on show that we run the risk of being too exhilarated to notice every death; does the film convince in its plea for the forgotten poor, or are we encouraged to forget them as they fall? In Portuguese.—*A.L.* (1/20/03) (Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, Kew Gardens Cinema, New York Twin, and 62nd & Broadway.)

COMANCHE STATION
In this tight, unpretentious 1960 Western, the director Budd Boetticher and his screenwriter, Burt Kennedy, shrewdly surround the righteous Randolph Scott with colorful good-bad and bad-good guys portrayed by avid novices and veterans hungry for a spot even in the desert sun. They include Claude Akins, Skip Homeier, and the Kevin Bacon of early-sixties B movies, Richard Rust—all of whom are part of a crooked gang conniving to get the hero's reward for rescuing a mother from Indian captivity. Sam Peckinpah said he didn't care for Boetticher's Westerns, but "Comanche Station" in particular is a worthy predecessor to his "Ride the High Country," which also starred Scott.—*Michael Sragow* (BAM Rose Cinemas; March 25.)

DAREDEVIL
Ben Affleck is a blind lawyer who becomes a superhero at night, and much of this comic-book spectacular is so dark that you can't see it. Not that you're missing anything. What can be seen is derivative, flat, and halfhearted. Dressed in a maroon jumpsuit, Affleck tries for a light-voiced, unemphatic presence, and he registers no more powerfully here than he did in "Pearl Harbor." He seems a put-on movie star, a lazybones puffed by helium bursts of publicity.—*David Denby* (3/3/03) (Battery Park 16, Empire 25, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

THE HOURS
It has to overcome an over-all morbidity, a fractured time sequence, and Philip Glass's intrusive, chiming score, and, amazingly, it does. Stephen Daldry directed this adaptation of Michael Cunningham's prize-winning 1998 novel, from a script by David Hare. They've fashioned a lovely, serious work—as good as any recent "literary" movie—devoted to two themes, the variety of human bonds, especially the bond of love, and the gift that the dying make to the living. Nicole Kidman gives a revelatory performance as Virginia Woolf, both in 1923, at the time of writing "Mrs. Dalloway," and in 1941, when she loaded her coat with stones and walked into a river. Julianne Moore is a depressed Los Angeles housewife in 1951, and Meryl Streep plays a contemporary

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New York literary editor who hopes to give a party for a poet friend (Ed Harris) dying of AIDS. The widely separated episodes fit together as surely and lightly as dancers in a Balanchine ballet.—*D.D.* *(12/23 & 30/02)* (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 72nd Street East, and Union Square.)

THE HUNTED

There's trouble in the Pacific Northwest: Benicio Del Toro is in the woods, protecting the deer. A former U.S. Army assassin, he's been trained in wilderness tracking and hand-to-hand combat, but a tour of duty in Bosnia sent him over the edge, and now he's become a rogue Cub Scout, living in trees and taking the Old Testament way too literally. This is bad news for the master tracker L. T. Bonham (Tommy Lee Jones), happily retired to British Columbia. After Del Toro takes out two hunters, the F.B.I. picks up Jones in a helicopter and charges him with bringing in his former protégé. This manly movie belongs to the veteran director William Friedkin, who has no idea how to show the art of tracking onscreen. By the evidence presented here, it seems to mean smelling your fingers, staring into tree branches, and walking oddly, as though you've pulled a muscle.—*Michael Agger* (Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, New York Twin, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

IRREVERSIBLE

A thoroughly nasty piece of work, though not an empty or a foolish one: the director, Gaspar Noé, gives every sign of careful cleverness. His film tells of a young couple (Monica Bellucci and Vincent Cassel) who make love, go to a Paris party, and leave separately. She is raped and beaten; he pursues the assailant and takes what he believes to be revenge. The whole story runs backward, beginning with death and violation and rewinding to a nice afternoon, a bright white screen, and the joyful strains of Beethoven. The irony is pure acid: any pleasure that we meet later in the film is spoiled and scarred by the events of the first half, which are not so much irreversible as unwatchable. The trouble is that the picture has fallen victim to its own reputation; from here on, despite the seriousness of Noé's intentions, he will be known as the Man Who Showed Too Much. In French.—*A.L.* (3/10/03) (Angelika Film Center, Chelsea Cinemas, and New York Twin.)

LAUREL CANYON

After the solemnities of "High Art," the director Lisa Cholodenko has turned to lighter matters: specifically, what to do if your mother is an unreconstructed hippie. Sam (Christian Bale) takes his fiancée, Alex (Kate Beckinsale), home to California to meet his mom, Jane (Frances McDormand), a record producer whose walls of photographs bear testament to a life misspent in rock. She is all the family that Sam has but far more than he wants, and Jane's idea of family values is to come within an inch of seducing her son's girlfriend, bringing a shameless young rock star (Alessandro Nivola) along for the ride. The movie has poise and a lightly perspiring sexiness, but also an uncertain sense of humor, and you end up rooting for the squares—especially Sam and his colleague Sara (Natascha McElhone), who have more fun in the front of a Volvo than seems either practical or legal. The soundtrack is full of ersatz British pop, so tuneless and squally that it could almost be the real thing.—*A.L.* (3/10/03) (Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Union Square.)

THE LIFE OF DAVID GALE

A hyper-articulate and, at times, heartfelt movie, but a mess nonetheless. Kevin Spacey stars as a philosophy professor and anti-death-penalty advocate who winds up on death row in Texas. Laura Linney plays his academic and protest-movement colleague, whom he allegedly raped and murdered. Kate Winslet turns up as an ace investigative reporter from New York who finds the last-minute evidence that may exonerate him. Some of the academic atmosphere is knowing and fun, and Spacey and Linney have a couple of lovely scenes together, but the thriller mechanics of the movie (it's plotted against a clock) insult the audience. At the climactic moment, Winslet's rented car stalls like a dumb burro, and she has to run through what appears to be the entire state of Texas. Alan Parker directed, and the script was written by an ex-philosophy professor, Charles Randolph.—*D.D.* (3/3/03) (Battery Park 16, Beekman, Chelsea Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

LOST IN LA MANCHA

Louis Pepe and Keith Fulton's documentary offers a new twist on the age-old pleasure of watching somebody truly and sumptuously screw up. Better still, none of it is his fault. The twist is that the fall guy, in this instance, is as playful and amenable a figure as exists in modern filmmaking: Terry Gilliam. As he tries to heave into motion his long-pondered adaptation of "Don Quixote," everything that can go wrong goes wrong, graced by a few extra glitches that even the most capricious of gods would not have dared to arrange. The combination of a Don (Jean Rochefort) so sick that he cannot dismount from his horse, Spanish weather of Biblical ferocity, and NATO jets roaring over the set would reduce most directors to despair, yet Gilliam comes up grinning. This account of his tribulations drags toward the end, but you leave with not only an admiring grasp of his Quixote-like obsession but also an absolute determination never to work in pictures.—*A.L.* (2/3/03) (Quad Cinema.)

OLD SCHOOL

Vince Vaughn, tall and handsome, with a widow's peak and a roving eye, is easily the most untrustworthy man in the movies since the advent of Bill Murray. In this genial hit movie, Vaughn is operating in low gear as a cocky salesman; the role isn't enough for him, but he's still hilarious, and so, at times, is the movie. Written (with many collaborators) and directed by Todd Phillips and assembled under the benevolent auspices of the comedy veteran Ivan Reitman, "Old School" follows a trio of thirtyish losers unable to face responsibility: the earnest and baffled Mitch (Luke Wilson); the hapless and uninhibited Frank (Will Ferrell), who has a tendency to remove his clothing at parties; and the flimflamming wise guy Beanie (Vaughn). The three open a frat house at the edge of some distinguished seat of higher learning. The humor is strictly hit or miss, but each of the leads is funny in his own style, especially Ferrell, who has an almost frighteningly infantile quality.—*D.D.* (3/17/03) (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

ON DANGEROUS GROUND

The first half of this 1951 film contains sensational urban-cop stuff, and Robert Ryan is great—eruptively expressive—as a police detective pushed to brutality, and almost to breakdown, by the hostility of crooks and citizens alike. Nicholas Ray shoots and cuts with offhand incisiveness, as if his camera were keyed to his cop's febrile brain. But when Ryan's boss (Ed Begley) dispatches him to crack a killing in the boondocks in order to cool him off, the movie dissolves into a melodramatic parable. Having experienced a debasing loneliness, Ryan goes through purification; Ida Lupino, as the blind sister of a mentally disturbed young murderer, is his angel of redemption.—*M.S.* (Gramercy Theatre; March 20.)

THE PIANIST

Roman Polanski's drama about the survival of a real-life Polish Jew, the pianist Wladyslav Szpilman (Adrien Brody), during the grim days of the Holocaust is a movie that has been perfectly produced. The sense of scale and detail is exact, and the violence is neither exaggerated nor minimized but presented with clear-eyed accuracy. Yet this is not a work of great originality or imagination. Its protagonist lacks depth, and the theme of survival through hiding is, by its very nature, redundant. The playwright Ronald Harwood adapted the 1946 book that Szpilman wrote about his experiences without attempting to open up the hero at all. Is he ashamed, defiant, guilty? Grateful for his luck? We haven't a clue. His survival is an anomaly, a mistake, a joke—and that may be why the story appealed to Polanski. Shot largely in Warsaw.—*D.D.* (1/13/03) (Battery Park 16, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kew Gardens Cinema, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, and Village Theatre VII.)

THE QUIET AMERICAN

The second adaptation of Graham Greene's novel, and, on the whole, a more successful effort than Joseph Mankiewicz's, of 1958. Michael Caine may lack the defeated nobility that Michael Redgrave brought to the role of the hero—a British journalist named Fowler—but few can beat Caine when it comes to the sad and the seedy. What is more, he squares off beautifully against Brendan Fraser. With his fine if bumbling manners, and the earnest thickness of his spectacles, Fraser is ideal as Pyle, the young do-gooder who, almost despite himself, winds up doing harm. The two men share a love for a young Vietnamese woman (Do Hai Yen), and the director, Phillip Noyce, manages not to whack us too hard with the symbolic weight of their rivalry. Greene fans, a prickly bunch at the best of times, will pick holes in the movie, but Christopher Doyle's camera, slithering through the rooms and battlegrounds of an alluring land, takes us as close as we could wish to the heart of the matter.—*A.L.* (12/2/02) (Cinema 3, Kew Gardens Cinema, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, and Village Theatre VII.)

THE SAFETY OF OBJECTS

A good cast can't save this pretentious movie about suburban lives of quiet desperation. Glenn Close, Dermot Mulroney, Patricia Clarkson, Kristen Stewart (the strikingly androgynous girl from "Panic Room"), and others say silly, overthought things to each other, and seem unable to start their cars without having some sort of epiphany. The director Rose Troche adapted the stories of A. M. Homes, and, as is the case in a lot of short-story movies, the connections between the characters feel manufactured, designed for maximum gazing across lawns at lighted windows and teary bedroom confessions.—*M.A.* (First & 62nd Street Cinemas, Lincoln Square, and Union Square.)

SPIDER

Patrick McGrath adapted his own novel about the muddled mind of a schizophrenic, Dennis (Spider) Cleg. As directed by David Cronenberg, the film is an emotionless exercise in audience patience. While Spider (Ralph Fiennes) mumbles around recalling the madness of his childhood, the viewer must distinguish what's real from what's delusional. The anemic Oedipal puzzle (the mother is played by Miranda Richardson, who, at times, morphs into Spider's landlady and his father's murderous girlfriend) unwinds tediously and Cronenberg's precise, desolate camerawork only adds to the artful numbness.—*B.D.* (Angelika Film Center and Kew Gardens Cinema.)

TALK TO HER

In Pedro Almodóvar's odd but touching romantic drama, two very different men are drawn together by a common task: taking care of women who have fallen into a coma. Benigno (Javier Cámara), a shy, seemingly asexual young male nurse, looks after Alicia (Leonor Watling), a beautiful ballet dancer. Marco (Darío Grandinetti), a fortyish Argentine writer, becomes the lover of a fierce, long-waisted female bullfighter (Rosario Flores). After she is gored in the ring, she never speaks again. Both love affairs are touched by fantasy. Almodóvar's point appears to be that you can't have love without fable—that every love affair is an improbable narrative wrung from non-being and loneliness. The movie is shot in a new, subdued style for the director: past and present flow together, and everything seems touched with a melancholy magic. Two ballets by the choreographer Pina Bausch are integral to the film's themes. In Spanish.—*D.D.* (11/25/02) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, Kew Gardens Cinema, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Sunshine Cinema.)

TEARS OF THE SUN

A rousing celebration of American military expertise, but one pricked by conscience. The stoical Lieutenant A. K. Waters (Bruce Willis) leads a crack unit of Navy SEALs into a civil conflict in Nigeria between Muslims and Christians. Their mission is to rescue an Italian-born American citizen (Monica Bellucci), a doctor operating a Catholic missionary hospital. Appalled by the atrocities committed against defenseless people, the unit winds up staying on the ground to protect the patients. Bellucci, a flaming dark beauty with snapping eyes and a sumptuous décolletage, runs through the bush with her shirt partly open. Because of such absurdities, and the general atmosphere of American noblesse oblige, skeptics have dismissed the movie as an embarrassing crock—another contrived occasion for U.S. soldiers to demonstrate their nobility while fighting and killing a great many nasty-looking Africans. Baldly stated, this is true, but the movie, directed by Antoine Fuqua, has been made with ravishing skill. The cinematographer, Mauro Fiore, who also worked with the director on "Training Day," does wonders matching the natural light from shot to shot.—*D.D.* (3/17/03) (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

ALSO PLAYING

AMANDLA!
A REVOLUTION IN FOUR-PART HARMONY
Film Forum.
BEND IT LIKE BECKHAM
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Sunshine Cinema.
HORNS AND HALOS
Cinema Village.
NOWHERE IN AFRICA
BAM Rose Cinemas, Kew Gardens Cinema, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Sunshine Cinema.
RUSSIAN ARK (12/16/02)
Cinema Village.
SPUN
Sunshine Cinema.
UNDER THE SKIN OF THE CITY
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.
WILLARD
84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, 19th Street East 6, 34th Street Theatre, and Village East Cinemas.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

Unless noted, call 212-777-FILM for show times.

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn.
Battery Park 16, West St. at Vesey St.
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinemas 1, 2, and 3, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (212-924-3363).
East 86th Street Cinemas, Third Ave. at 86th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
Empire 25, on 42nd St. near Eighth Ave. (212-398-3939).
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
42nd Street E Walk, 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.
Kew Gardens Cinema, 81-05 Lefferts Blvd., Queens (718-441-9835).
Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St. (212-757-2280).
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 66th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (212-688-3800).
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
The Screening Room, 54 Varick St. (212-334-2100).
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
Sunshine Cinema, 139-143 E. Houston St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
34th Street Theatre, 312 W. 34th St.
Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

R. GREGORY CHRISTIE

Opening March 21, Johnnie To's duelling-assassin movie, "Fulltime Killer."

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Through March 30: Films selected by the New York Film Critics Circle. March 22 at 2: "Breathless" (1959, Jean-Luc Godard; in French), introduced by Andrew Sarris. ♦ March 22 at 4: "Chungking Express" (1994, Wong Kar-wai; in Cantonese and Mandarin), introduced by Dennis Lim. ♦ March 23 at 1: "Jaws" (1975, Steven Spielberg), introduced by John Anderson. ♦ March 23 at 3:30: "Nashville" (1975, Robert Altman), introduced by Stephen Holden. ♦ Repertory nights. March 22-23 at 6:30: "F for Fake" (1974, Orson Welles).
ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES
32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5181)—March 20 at 7 and 9 and March 22-23 at 5, 7, and 9: "Sobibor, October 14, 1943, 4 P.M." (2001, Claude Lanzmann; in Hebrew, French, and German). ♦ March 21 at 6: "As I Was Moving Ahead Occasionally I Saw Brief Glimpses of Beauty" (2000, Jonas Mekas). ♦ March 23 at 6: "Nanook of the North" (1922, Robert Flaherty).
BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-777-3456)—March 19 at 7:15 and 9:30: "Crane World" (1999, Pablo Trapero; in Spanish). ♦ March 20-23: Oscar-winning films that take place in New York. March 20 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:30: "Annie Hall" (1977, Woody Allen). ♦ March 21 at 2, 5, and 8: "All About Eve" (1950, Joseph L. Mankiewicz). ♦ March 22 at 2, 4:30, and 7:30: "On the Waterfront" (1954, Elia Kazan). ♦ March 23 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "The Lost Weekend" (1945, Billy Wilder). ♦ March 24 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Lisa and the Devil" (1972, Mario Bava; in Italian). ♦ March 25 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Comanche Station" (†).
FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—Through March 27: "Fassbinder," a six-week retrospective. Unless otherwise noted, all films are in German. March 19-20 at 1, 2:50, 4:40, 6:30, 8:20, and 10:10: "The American Soldier" (1970). ♦ March 21-22 at 2, 4:30, 7, and 9:30: "Lili Marleen" (1981; in English). ♦ March 23-24 at 1, 3:10, 5:20, 7:30, and 9:40: "The Stationmaster's Wife" (1977). ♦ March 25 at 1:15, 3:15, 5:15, 7:15, and 9:15: "Gods of the Plague" (1969).
GRAMERCY THEATRE
127 E. 23rd St. (212-777-4900)—Through April 12: "Nicholas Ray, Writ Large," a twenty-three-film retrospective. March 20 at 1:30 and March 22 at 6: "Born to Be Bad" (1950). ♦ March 20 at 3:30: "In a Lonely Place" (1950). ♦ March 20 at 6: "They Live by Night" (1947). ♦ March 20 at 8: "On Dangerous Ground" (†). ♦ March 21 at 2:30 and March 22 at 1: "55 Days in Peking" (1963). ♦ March 21 at 6: "A Woman's Secret" (1949). ♦ March 21 at 7:45: "Hot Blood" (1956). ♦ March 22 at 4: "Run for Cover" (1955). ♦ March 22 at 8: "Party Girl" (1958). ♦ March 23 at 1: "Bigger Than Life" (1956). ♦ March 23 at 3: "Rebel Without a Cause" (1955). ♦ March 23 at 5:30: "King of Kings" (1961). ♦ March 24 at 6: "I'm a Stranger Here Myself: A Portrait of Nicholas Ray" (1974, David Helpern, Jr., and James C. Gutman).
PIONEER THEATRE
155 E. 3rd St. (212-254-3300)—March 19-25: Screenings of Oscar-nominated shorts, both animated and live-action.
SUNSHINE CINEMA
139-143 E. Houston St. (212-358-0573)—Midnight movies. March 21-22: "Jackass: The Movie" (2002, Jeff Tremaine).
THALIA THEATRE
Symphony Space, 2537 Broadway, at 95th St. (212-864-5400)—"New Voices Since the Eighties." March 23 at 2: "Genesis" (1999, Cheick Oumar Sissoko; in French). ♦ March 23 at 4: "Guimba the Tyrant" (1995, Sissoko; in French and Bambara). ♦ March 23 at 6:30: "Mother and Son" (1997, Alexander Sokurov; in Russian). ♦ March 23 at 8: "Second Circle" (1990, Sokurov; in Russian).
WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—Through March 26: "Twenty-Five Years of Women Calling the Shots," works by women filmmakers and writers. See www.nywift.org for a schedule of panelists, talks, and director-attended screenings. March 20 at 8:30: "Just Another Girl on the IRT" (1993, Leslie Harris). ♦ March 21 at 6: "True Love" (1989, Nancy Savoca). ♦ March 21 at 8:30: "Smithereens" (1982, Susan Seidelman). ♦ March 22 at 5: "The Willmar 8" (1980, Lee Grant). ♦ March 22 at 7: "Who Killed Vincent Chin?" (1988, Christine Choy and Renee Tajima). ♦ March 22 at 9:15: "Paris Is Burning" (1990, Jennie Livingston). ♦ March 23 at 5: "Variety" (1983, Bette Gordon). ♦ March 23 at 7:30: "India Cabaret" (1985, Mira Nair). ♦ March 25 at 6: "Between the Lines" (1977, Joan Micklin Silver). ♦ March 25 at 8:30: "Beirut: The Last Home Movie" (1988, Jennifer Fox). ♦ March 26 at 6: "Finding Christa" (1991, Camille Billops and James Hatch). ♦ March 26 at 8:30: "I Shot Andy Warhol" (1995, Mary Harron).

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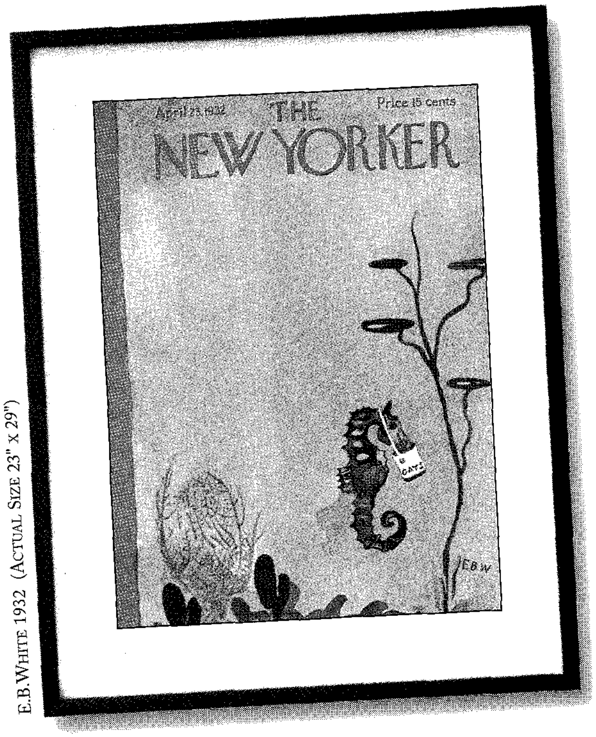
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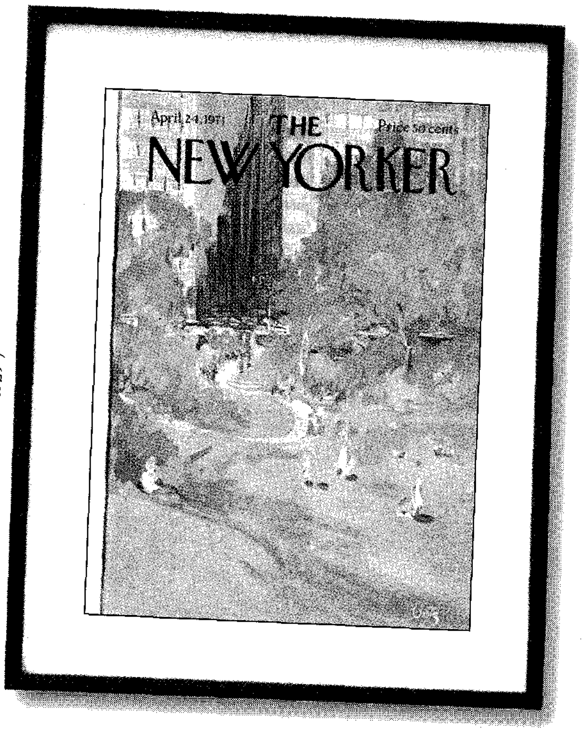
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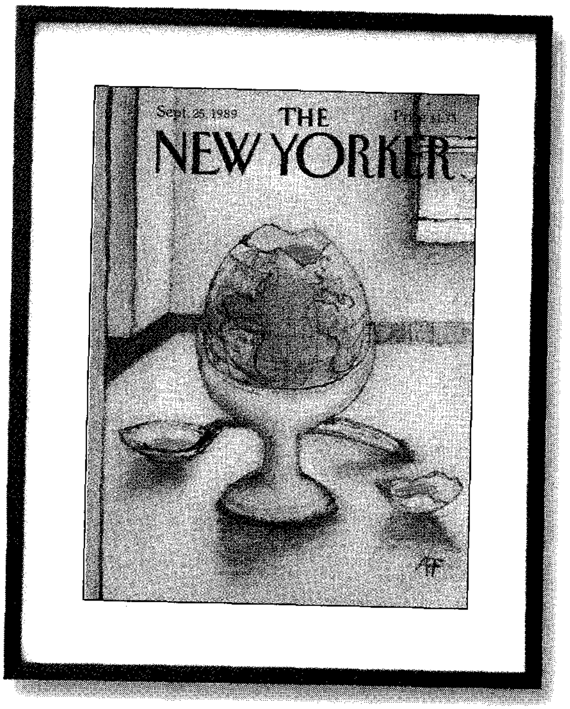
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THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

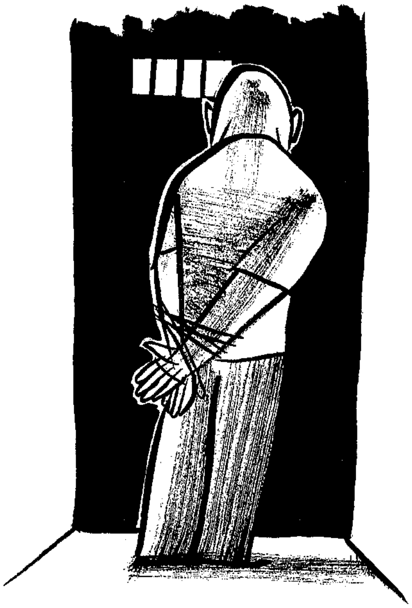
COMMENT
TERROR AND TORTURE

"I see that a man I know to be a ruffian is pursuing a young girl," Leo Tolstoy wrote in "The Kingdom of God Is Within You." "I have a gun in my hand—I kill the ruffian and save the girl. But the death or the wounding of the ruffian has positively taken place, while what would have happened if this had not been I cannot know. And what an immense mass of evil must result, and indeed does result, from allowing men to assume the right of anticipating what may happen. Ninety-nine per cent of the evil of the world is founded on this reasoning—from the Inquisition to dynamite bombs."

This is the traditional case for pacifism. It hangs on an insight about means and ends. "Thou shalt not kill": whether the commandment is seen as coming from God or simply from self-evident moral intuition, few dispute that to kill is to commit a wrong, and that to refrain from killing is to prevent a wrong. In war, killing is the means. The end—the "war aim," the putative goal of the killing—may be right, but it is speculative, possibly unachievable, off in a future that is more or less unknowable. By its example, and by its corrupting effect, killing begets killing, evil begets evil. To do evil today, in the expectation that in the future, at the end of a long chain of causation and chance, something good will emerge, is the wager that pacifists refuse to make.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

Governments have little patience with this line of thought, whether or not they are willing to excuse its adherents from military service. (What if the ruffian had just been seen to murder the young girl's family? Tolstoy does not say.) Neither do the great majority of people, who, while seeing no virtue in killing, nevertheless believe that there are times when war is the preferred moral choice. But the logic of conscientious objection, which is also the logic of the Golden Rule, is powerful enough to make itself felt even at the level where states pursue their interests with all due lethality and hypocrisy. In the continuum of political violence—assassination, torture, terrorism, and war, reading from small-scale to large—international law deems war alone to be permissible, albeit only in extreme circumstances, and tries to tame it with rules and conventions. The rest are seen, theoretically at least, as outside the pale—as means that no end can be allowed to justify.



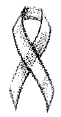
At the present dismal and disorienting moment, everything, as they say in Washington, is on the table. Before September 11, 2001, no one imagined that a time would come when the permissibility of torture would be an urgent topic of public discussion, let alone something like the official, though of course unacknowledged, policy of the United States. The arrest earlier this month, in Pakistan, of Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, an alleged senior lieutenant of Al Qaeda, touched off a round of speculation about how the government might try to separate him from his information. But for some time there have been reliable reports of American interrogators' subjecting terror suspects to what the C.I.A. calls "stress and duress" techniques. In a landmark Washington *Post* story last December 26th, Dana Priest and Barton Gellman listed some of those techniques: beating people; forcing them to stand or kneel for hours, or holding them in awkward, painful positions; using bright lights or loud noises to deprive them systematically of sleep; if they are ill or have been wounded, withholding medical attention and painkillers; and turning them over to countries whose methods of inquiry are not so gentle.

It can be debated how many of these

SOME NEW RIBBONS

Endorse aggressive pursuit of terrorists but oppose war.

Believe we should recognize that North Korea and Iran are just as dangerous as Iraq.



Not exactly for the war, but not exactly against it, either.

Support colorectal cancer awareness and the Adopt-a-Greyhound program. Oh, and I'm against the war.

Support swift, aggressive military action but cannot bring myself to call it war.

Support the war and am sick of listening to spouse talk about how the younger me would hate this version of me.

methods violate the United Nations Convention Against Torture, which defines torture as "any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted." The last of them almost certainly violates the Convention's ban on sending anyone to a country "where there are substantial grounds for believing that he would be in danger of being subjected to torture." As the *Post* noted, suspects have been "rendered"—the verb is all too apt—to Egypt, Morocco, and Syria, all of which, according to the State Department's own human-rights reports, routinely use methods of pain infliction that are far more gruesome than lights and noise.

When the Senate ratified the Torture Convention, in 1990, it did so at the urging of the first President Bush, who, with war looming in the Persian Gulf, wanted to deny Saddam Hussein the slightest cover for mistreating any American soldiers his forces might capture. On the eve of a second Iraq war, a second President Bush lists ending torture as prominent among the war's aims. He mentioned it repeatedly during the news conference he held on March 6th. Earlier, in his State of the Union address, he catalogued "methods used in the torture chambers of Iraq: electric shock, burning with hot irons, dripping acid on the skin, mutilation with electric drills, cutting out tongues, and rape." And he said, "If this is not evil, then evil has no meaning."

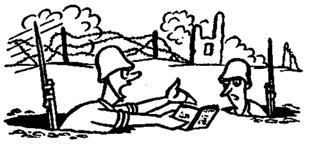
There are obvious distinctions to be drawn between the C.I.A.'s "stress and duress" and the horrors of Saddam's dungeons—in their purposes (aborting terror attacks versus maintaining a tyranny) and, more important, in their degrees of cruelty. The distinctions are both real and slippery, like the distinction Palestinians make between suicide bombings in the occupied territories and in Israel proper. They get slipperier when prisoners are turned over to countries like Egypt, our fellow-signatory of the Torture Convention. And slipperiest of all is the slope from what has been called "torture lite" to torture dark. We simply do not know what goes on in the interrogation centers of Kabul and Guantánamo. We don't, most of us, want to know.

The argument is sometimes made that torture is useless—that it is a bad way to gather intelligence, because people under torture lie. Torture is "a wonderful way of getting false confessions out of innocent people," a human-rights activist said on television the other day, but "a terrible way of getting the truth out of guilty people." If matters were that simple, however, torture would be so rare that covenants abolishing it would be superfluous rather than ineffectual. All intelligence-gathering methods are imperfect; all produce "noise"; all are vulnerable to deceit and subject to verification. Torture, alas, is no worse than many. Over time, it probably ends up augmenting what it seeks to prevent, if what it seeks to prevent is terror. (A case in point is Ayman al-Zawahiri, whom Egyptian torturers made one of the deadliest terrorists on earth.) But, in the short run, torture, sometimes, "works."

War kills, maims, and otherwise destroys many more people than torture does, and most of them are innocent—not only civilians, who become "collateral damage," but also soldiers, many of whom are either unwilling conscripts or guilty simply of wishing to serve their country. Torture, per se, is not lethal, and its victims can be far from innocent, but the moral revulsion it provokes has a special sharpness, and in this lies the deepest reason to abjure it. In war, valor is possible; comradeship is possible; heroism is possible. Even terrorism and assassination can offer scope for an ugly kind of courage. But, just as the victims of torture are utterly helpless, the perpetrators of it are utterly debased. Like capital punishment, torture is abhorrent not only for what it does to the tortured but for what it makes of the torturer. It is the perfect opposite of what we like to think our country has stood for. It is surely not what we wish to become.

—*Hendrik Hertzberg*

WAR DEPT.
UNEMBEDDED



ROBERT RISKO, BEN GREENMAN

I began to have real doubts about going through with my mission to "embed," as a journalist with the United States Marines, when a reporter raised the unexpected question "What do I do if I barf inside my gas mask?"

The question was perfectly serious—nausea can be one of the first symptoms of a chemical attack—but the young lieutenant who was leading the seminar, on a tennis court at the Hilton Kuwait Resort, had obviously never been forced to consider this situational fine point. "That would be a problem," the lieutenant said. "If you vomit liquid, you'll just want to clear it by pushing this and blowing hard through that." He grasped his gas mask and fingered the outlet valve for all of us to see. "But if you've got spew chunks, they could clog the valve and you'd . . . well, you'd be a goner."

As I followed this conversation, I was wearing my own gas mask, breathing in its stale rubbery essence and trying to imagine how I would react in the Iraqi desert when the first chemical alarm sounded. There were approximately fifty journalists on the tennis court, hunched in little seminars of ten under the smiting Arabian sun. We were here to receive our "N.B.C. training" (Nuclear, Biological, Chemical), and we had only moments ago been issued our masks, medicines, and charcoal-lined chemsuits in brown plastic garbage bags. The lieutenant insisted that we practice donning our masks until we could perform the procedure, eyes shut, in nine seconds or less. It should become part of our "muscle memory," he said. Out in the desert, an alarm would sound and we would hear, "Gas! Gas! Gas!"—the cry always going out in threes. "Your first instinct when you hear the alarm will be to get one last little breath," our instructor said, inhaling sharply. "But if we're in a cloud of nerve agent that's just what it'll be—your last breath."

If, after successfully securing the mask, we began to experience any of the telltale signs of nerve-agent poisoning—such as profuse drooling, a sudden intense headache, or a general confusion "about who you are"—we were immediately to medicate ourselves with the "auto-injectors" provided in our kits. I opened my bag and studied one of the little plastic syringes. It was filled with an antidote called atropine and equipped with a tightly coiled interior spring that was strong enough to plunge the needle through several layers of clothing and into the deep tissue of the thigh. In an emergency, we were supposed to hold the auto-injector firmly against our flanks for a good ten seconds, as the atropine slowly drained into our bloodstream.

For the rest of the seminar, as we practiced other unmentionables, I sat there on the tennis court, breathing thinly in my mask, wondering how our sad, tense world had come to this.

It had been a long, queasy week for the five hundred journalists waiting to embed with the U.S. armed forces in Kuwait. For many, including those who, like me, were scheduled to join up with the Marines, there had been repeated scheduling delays and snafus that had pushed back by more than a week our promised rendezvous with the soldiers who were camped in undisclosed locations in the sandy wastelands near the Iraqi border. We were told to return to our various hotels, lie low, and wait for a phone call. For some, this extra week was a reprieve, but for most of us it was a curse, especially in a country without alcohol.

A paranoid, they say, is a person in possession of the facts. Maybe I was becoming paranoid, but the information I was gathering all around me was unsettling at best. The Kuwait *Times* was filled with stories on dirty bombs, suitcase bombs, smallpox, drone aircraft, Vx, sarin gas, and all the other nasty tricks that Saddam may or may not have planned for us. A crack team of N.B.C. experts from the Czech Republic could be seen around town in their rubber suits, monitoring the air.

At restaurants and spontaneously arranged hotel parties around town, journalists spooked one another with biochemical ghost stories. We were going to be right there with the soldiers, experiencing whatever hardships and horrors were happening on the ground. There was a disturbing circular argument behind this conflict: The war's stated purpose was, in large part, to prove to the world that Saddam had weapons of mass destruction; if he really had them, and no one doubted that he did, it seemed only logical to believe that he was going to use them, especially when cornered. This invasion was thus designed to root out the very weapons we hoped—and at the same time feared—that he possessed. And we journalists were coming along not only to witness any chemical nastiness that might ensue but also, presumably, to breathe it.

With this embed program, the Department of Defense was embarking on a public-relations experiment of unprecedented size and scope. It remained to be seen how much latitude would be afforded the media once the bullets began flying, but by the look of things the Pentagon truly wanted us to be right there on the battlefield, free and unfettered, reporting precisely what we saw.

Still, I had trouble fathoming why an Administration that had shown no particular concern for world opinion in the previous months would go to such lengths to accommodate so many journalists. One military officer at the Hilton privately suggested an answer: "We want you here to document the gas and the other stuff Saddam has in his arsenal. If he has it, or, God forbid, uses it, the world's not going to believe the U.S. Army. But they'll believe you." This, the more I thought about it, was not a very encouraging reason to be here. As the day of the embed drew closer, I began to feel like a lab rat, heading off for great chemical experiments.

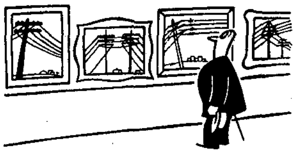
For the most part, the embeds worked by luck of the draw. My embed slot was one of the sexy ones—quite possibly the sexiest. I was to be with the Reconnaissance Battalion of the 1st Marine Division. First Recon was basically the front line. Wherever its men were was likely to be the most dangerous spot in the Marine "battle space." As I milled among the other journalists—many of them hardened war correspondents and military geeks—I was repeatedly congratulated on my good fortune. They said things like "First Recon, aye, the able-bodied killers," "Lots of action," and "You're gonna get some real good stuff out there." One guy just raised his eyebrows and said, "You got a death wish?"

The last straw, for me, was a little session the Marines held the day before the embed buses were scheduled to take us away. The seminar was run by a blunt, amicable jarhead, a Sergeant Parks, who launched right into a description of what might happen if we were "slimed" by a "snowstorm," the operative term for a toxic cloud in the new military parlance. Parks related how a victim of a chemical attack would lapse into intense, twitching convulsions, which he likened to "doing the funky chicken." The nerve agents could be hurled at us in any number of ways, he said: drone aircraft, short-range surface-to-surface missiles, Scuds, mortar shells, artillery rounds, even chemical mines. As a matter of policy, the armed forces were proceeding on the prudent assumption that every incoming round contained chemical agents until proved otherwise; consequently, we could expect to wear our chemsuits—which were cumbersome, clammy, and inordinately hot—most of the way to Baghdad. Parks then gave us color commentary on the effects of the various blistering agents that Saddam might use. "If you ingest mustard gas," he said, "it will cause horrible sores that will eat right through your esophagus." He said he'd seen photographs of skin blisters "as big as my hand." Then he amended the description: "Not just blisters, but blisters on top of blisters. Thing is, if you try to lance them they just keep on growing." Some blistering agents, he said, cause the skin to blow up in hideous cauliflowers of deformity. "This one victim's hand looked just like Jiffy Pop," Parks said.

That was quite enough for me. I stopped taking serious notes at this point, and simply wrote, in large, definitive letters, "We're fucked." I knew then and there that I couldn't go through with this. Although I had nothing but respect for the United States Marines, I had not signed a contract and was, I'd almost forgotten, free to leave. This seemed like a good time. I told Captain Joe Plenzler, the marine in charge, "No offense, but I can't do this." And, as I did so, I was struck by an almost desperate desire to go back—not only back home to my wife and three children but back in time, back to the days of bull markets and meaningful alliances and guiltless French wine. I turned in my chemsuit, my atropine injectors, and my mask. I was immensely relieved to learn that it wasn't too late. I wished Captain Plenzler Godspeed and good luck. An hour later, I saw the embed buses pull out of the Hilton's parking lot and chuff north, toward the Iraqi border.

—*Hampton Sides*

OFF DAY DEPT.
THINK POSITIVE



Bobby Holik, the New York Rangers' nine-million-dollar center, is not one of the most popular players in the National Hockey League. A few years ago, when he was playing for the New Jersey Devils, some Ranger players wrote his uniform number—16—on their locker-room chalkboard, alongside the word "asshole." Now that he's crossed the Hudson, the Rangers have softened toward him somewhat, and given him a new nickname: Positive Bob. The name is sarcastic, and based on the fact that Holik speaks his mind a little too freely. He's a pessimist. He complains a lot. When the Rangers lose, he doesn't say they played hard and came close; he finds fault. When they win, he's apt to say they got lucky. (And they haven't got lucky often enough; the team is on pace to miss the playoffs for the sixth straight season.)

"I was just talking to a lot of guys on the team yesterday, and it's like the problem is—well, I don't know if it's a *problem*—I have opinions," Holik said recently, while sitting in an exhibition hall at the Museum of the City of New York. "I can't keep my mouth shut." Holik's father, Jaroslav, had the same "problem" as a young hockey player in Czechoslovakia in the nineteen-seventies, and got himself suspended from the National Team. "During Communism, you know, being opinionated was not necessarily popular," Holik said. (Bobby moved from Czechoslovakia to the United States in 1990, after the Velvet Revolution.)

Holik likes to describe himself as "a man who marches to his own drummer," but he was limping, not marching, when he arrived at the museum, on account of an ankle injury he'd sustained during a game the night before. His iconoclasm was evident just the same; that afternoon, many of Holik's teammates were participating in a *Maxim* photo shoot, but Bobby was more interested in the "Between Worlds: Kabul/New York" exhibit, a juxtaposition of photographs taken in the two cities during the fall of 2001.

Positive Bob is an enormous man (six feet seven on skates, and two hundred and forty-plus pounds), with a face that's a caricature of a hockey player's: square jaw, nose a little flattened, hair cropped close, and a scar that begins just above his right ear and zigzags up and across the top of his scalp. When he sweats, his hair separates on either side of the scar, and the effect is of a face that has been reattached by a zipper. (The scar is the result of surgery performed long ago, in which a portion of his skull was removed and fused into his jawbone.) On the ice, he is a coach's dream: a two-way player, intelligent, with a mean streak.

Standing next to a photograph of Northern Alliance soldiers, Holik seemed less menacing. He wears glasses outside the rink, and he was dressed in khaki pants, a plaid shirt, and sneakers. His hair was dry. His voice—high-pitched, and with a strong Eastern European accent—had a soft, almost warbling tone. After a few minutes of hobbling through the installation ("I like the museums where they have the audio guides, the headphones," he said), Holik found a room with a few rows of benches and sat down to rest his ankle. Surrounded by drawings and etchings of the Croton Aqueduct, he began offering opinions: about war with Iraq (for), France and Germany (against), Czech politics (corrupt), commuting to New York (fun), *Post* columnist Steve Dunleavy (great), the Brooklyn Bridge (amazing). He paused to speak with the Rangers' medical trainer on a cell phone. "It's so tender," he said, peeling down a sock to examine his ankle.

Holik and his wife, Renee, keep up with the various exhibit listings in the newspapers, and try to go to museums whenever they can find the time. "It's not like it's the only thing we do, but I think you got to expand your horizons," he said. In summer, he expands his horizons to Jackson Hole, Wyoming, but, invariably, he grows restless there and becomes homesick for the "energy of life" in New York. "The best thing about living in this area is there's always an interesting topic of conversation," he said. "You meet people who say, 'I went over there, and I saw this and that.' So then you tell them where *you* went. People are interesting, and they have interesting things to say and discuss." He pointed toward the museum's staircase, at a handful of patrons: interesting people.

An attendant appeared, and said it was closing time. Positive Bob got up, wincing a little. "I came over the George Washington Bridge today, and I drove down Park Avenue, through Harlem," he said. "I've never been in these parts of the city. It's nice. You just drive around. Always something to see."

—*Ben McGrath*

THE FINANCIAL PAGE

DECISIONS, DECISIONS

For months, traders on the world's stock and commodity exchanges have been preoccupied with one issue: war with Iraq. If you think that war will be over quickly, you buy stocks. If you believe that it will drag on, you sell them. And if you think that the Middle East will be plunged into chaos you buy gold. For speculators on the New York Merc or the International Petroleum Exchange, every trade is like a wager on what will happen, and when, to Saddam Hussein.

For speculators on Web sites like TradeSports and NewsFutures.com, though, every trade actually is a wager on Saddam. At each of these sites, markets have been set up where, by buying and selling futures contracts, you can bet on such questions as when war will begin and when Saddam will fall. (The market for "Saddam futures" on TradeSports says that there's a seventy-nine-per-cent chance he'll be gone by the end of April.) There is, perhaps, something ghoulish about gambling on war. (Think of Adam Trask, in John Steinbeck's novel "East of Eden," rejecting as tainted the money his son Cal made speculating on bean futures during the First World War.) But in a sense the NewsFutures traders are only trying to do what op-ed writers, TV pundits, and Presidential advisers attempt to do every day: predict the future. The big difference is that the betting markets are far more likely to be right.

The market in Saddam futures is the latest version of what are sometimes called "decision markets." They've been around for more than a decade, and in that time their track record in forecasting events has been exceptional. The best-known example is the Iowa Electronic Markets. The I.E.M., which was founded in 1988 and is open to all comers, allows people to buy and sell shares based on the percentage of the vote that they think candidates will get in upcoming elections. At any moment, the price of a candidate's shares reflects the market's collective judgment of how well he'll do. If George W. Bush's shares are trading at 56.4, the market is anticipating that he'd get 56.4 per cent of the vote.

The I.E.M. routinely outperforms major national polls. In the last four Presidential elections, for instance, almost six hundred different polls were conducted, and the I.E.M.'s market price on the day each of them was released turned out to be closer to the election results seventy-five per cent of the time. And the I.E.M.'s election-eve predictions in those four contests were off by an average of just 1.37 per cent.

The Hollywood Stock Exchange, which allows people to speculate on box-office returns, opening-weekend performance, and the Oscars, has also been prescient. Traders' predictions of opening-weekend returns are more accurate than the movie industry's forecasts, and the Exchange has done a good job of foreseeing nominations as well. Last year, its traders correctly predicted thirty-five of the forty Oscar nominees in the top eight categories. And then there's the eerily accurate Foresight Exchange, where speculators can gamble on a wide variety of topics—say, whether Catholic priests will be allowed to marry by 2005, or when physicists will discover a Higgs boson.

CHRISTOPH NIEMANN

Why do decision markets work so well? They are extremely efficient at aggregating information and tapping into the collective wisdom of a group of traders, and groups are almost always smarter than the smartest people in them. As in financial markets, the incentive to get the better of others (whether the reward is profit or mere satisfaction) causes traders to seek out good information. The absence of hierarchy—markets don't have vice-presidents—insures that no single person has too much influence and that diverse viewpoints don't get shut out.

Decision markets also skirt the political and personal issues that so often clog the flow of information within organizations. Because people are rewarded only for being right, they have no incentive to hide information, pursue agendas, or go along with the crowd. Of course, an organization can't rely on such prophecies unless it is run by leaders who don't claim to have a monopoly on wisdom. Leaders like that are hard to come by, which may be why decision markets have been ignored, for the most part, by corporations and governments.

That may be changing, though. Hewlett-Packard has used artificial markets for sales forecasts. Essentially, H.-P. employees bought and sold shares depending on what they thought sales in a particular month would be. The number of people participating was small—never more than twenty-six—and each market ran for only a week, but in the course of three years the markets outperformed the company's official forecasts seventy-five per cent of the time.

And then there's the Defense Department, which recently set up something called the FutureMAP program, to investigate and experiment with decision markets. Two companies are already working with the Pentagon to build and test markets that would allow defense and intelligence analysts to speculate on such strategic and geopolitical issues as "the probabilities of specific kinds of failure within our national infrastructure"—that is, what are the most likely targets of another terrorist attack?—and the possible consequences of economic and political turmoil abroad. This may be surprising, given the Bush Administration's command-and-control management style, but it's a smart response to the limitations of traditional intelligence analysis—limitations that in the past few years have been painfully exposed. It may be hard to see TradeSports' would-be war profiteers as avatars of the future, but there it is. The future belongs to the speculators, not the spooks.

—*James Surowiecki*

LETTER FROM BAGHDAD

INVASIONS

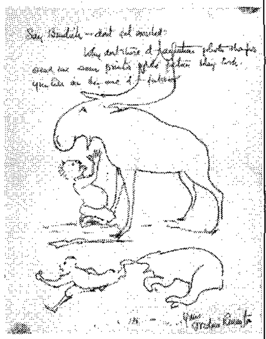
Nervous Iraqis remember earlier conflicts.

BY JON LEE ANDERSON

A *turab*, an ill wind that makes the air clammy-hot and full of dust, swept through Baghdad on the sixth of March, signalling the beginning of spring, with summer soon to follow. The sky turned a luminescent, murky brown, and plastic bags and other refuse blew about. My driver, Sabah, who is usually cheerful, became dour and languid and complained of a headache and fever. He wanted to go to the *hammam*, the Turkish baths, to relax, but it was women-only day, and Sabah cursed and popped some Panadol painkillers instead. That afternoon, my government minder, a listless young man named Khalid, said that he wanted to visit his family in Karbala, a couple of hours away. He would be back the next morning, he promised, muttering enigmatically about making arrangements before the war came. After Khalid left, Sabah said that he was unlikely to return, and he did not. Khalid had asked me when I thought the Americans would invade. He said he believed that they would do it on March 14th, a Shia day of mourning, commemorating the martyrdom of the Prophet's grandson at the Battle of Karbala in the year 680. "I think they will do this on purpose, as an insult to Muslims," he said. When I told Khalid that I thought the American war planners had other things to consider—the weather, military strategy, political and diplomatic negotiations—he seemed unconvinced.

Whether or not the *turab* had anything to do with it, March 6th was the day that many Iraqis concluded that war was, after all, inevitable. The Russians, with perhaps the most sizable remaining contingent of foreign diplomats, evacuated most of their embassy staff, and the Japanese announced that they were departing the next morning. Pretty much everyone else, except for about three hundred Western journalists, was already gone. Even some of the so-called human shields, a motley contingent of European, Australian, American, and Turkish antiwar and environmental activists who had pitched up a fortnight earlier, ready to sacrifice themselves, had succumbed to nerves and squabbling and begun to withdraw. Medical workers reported, sotto voce, that anti-aircraft guns were being installed on the roofs of hospitals. At the Triumph Leader Museum, which houses a collection of gifts given to Saddam Hussein over the years, curators had removed things from the display cases and squirrelled them away for safekeeping, although it was doubtful how safe anything would be anywhere in Baghdad once the bombs began to fall. I went to the museum to take another look at the gun that had been used in 1920 to assassinate Colonel Gerard Leachman, a British officer who spent the First World War in the deserts of what was then Mesopotamia, leading Bedouins in skirmishes against the Ottoman Turks. By 1920, after the League of Nations gave the British a "mandate" to govern what was now referred to as Iraq, Leachman was trying to subdue restive Arab tribesmen. He advocated "wholesale slaughter" as the only really effective method, and in present-day Iraq his assassin, Sheikh Dhari, is remembered as a hero and a patriot. The Sheikh's descendants gave his gun to Saddam as a birthday present a few years ago.

The March 6th issue of the *Iraq Daily*, a badly translated English-language newspaper produced by the Ministry of Information, carried the usual stories giving the government's spin on events, including an editorial with the headline "THE U.S. ARMY GENERALS DREAM OF THE BRITISH VANISHED EMPIRE." The editorialist referred to Britain's calamitous twentieth-century military adventures in Iraq and suggested that the Americans would share a similar fate: "We have prepared for you a nice and comfortable grave next to your inferior Stanley Maude"—the British general



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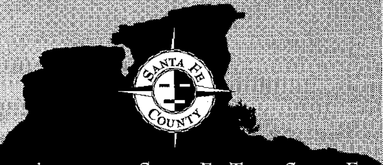

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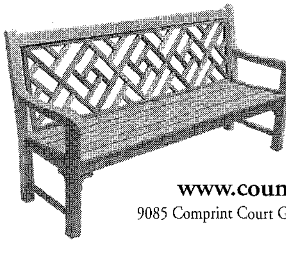

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who captured Baghdad from the Ottomans in 1917 and died there while attempting to impose some kind of order on Mesopotamia's Sunnis, Shiites, Kurds, Jews, and various tribes and clans. The curator who was called to assist me at the Triumph Leader Museum seemed to share the editorialist's point of view. She asked me where I was from, and when I told her she taunted me with a little rhyme: "Welcome, U.S.A., go away." But another curator was more sympathetic. He said he would fetch the gun, and he went down some stairs and returned in a few minutes, along with several uniformed guards, carrying a long-barrelled bolt-action rifle. It was, the curator explained, a Brno rifle made under license in Persia, specially for long-distance precision marksmen. He pointed out some Farsi script on the barrel, and the numbered sight for calibrating distance. "This," he said, smiling, "is the rifle that killed Colonel Leachman." I admired it for a few minutes, and the gun was taken away again.

Colonel Leachman was a contemporary of T. E. Lawrence, and, like Lawrence, he became famous for his exploits in the desert, living among the Arabs and accomplishing great feats of endurance and daring. Lawrence was more celebrated than Leachman, largely because of Lowell Thomas's razzmatazz presentation of his story, and because Lawrence lived to write his memoirs, but Leachman was a heroic figure, and news of his murder both inspired the Arab tribes to revolt and horrified the British public, which was already having second thoughts about the occupation of the Middle East. Leachman had come to Mesopotamia in 1907, after serving in the Boer War and then in India. He spent a short time in the cosmopolitan society of Westerners in the cities of Basra and Baghdad, but he made his reputation moving among the tribes of the Euphrates. He wore traditional Arab garments and rode horses and camels on long trips across desolate, unmapped landscapes, reporting back on the intrigues among tribal chieftains during the last days of the Ottoman Empire.

Leachman was a severe man, and by the time of the Armistice, in 1918, he had survived many savage battles and many attempts on his life. After the war, he was ruthless in putting down Arab uprisings. The British used aerial bombardments as a cost-efficient method of controlling the resentful tribes, and Leachman was especially feared for his ideas about quelling disorder. In August, 1920, he drove west from Baghdad toward the town of Al Fallujah, about forty miles away, to meet with Sheikh Dhari, perhaps to negotiate the waiver of a loan to the Sheikh, who had thus far not participated in the Arab rebellion. Exactly what happened that day is unclear, but the British tended to believe that Leachman was shot in the back at a police post, and that he had been set up.

Sheikh Dhari's descendants, the family who donated the rifle to Saddam, still live in the village of Khandhari, on the old road to Al Fallujah, which runs alongside the superhighway linking Baghdad and Amman. I was taken there by a new government minder, who replaced the truant Khalid. The village is about halfway to Al Fallujah, which is now the site of a complex of industrial facilities under

"If everything else is gone, then why fight for Baghdad," an Iraqi said. "What is the point in that?" Photograph by Jason Florio.

CORBIS SYGMA

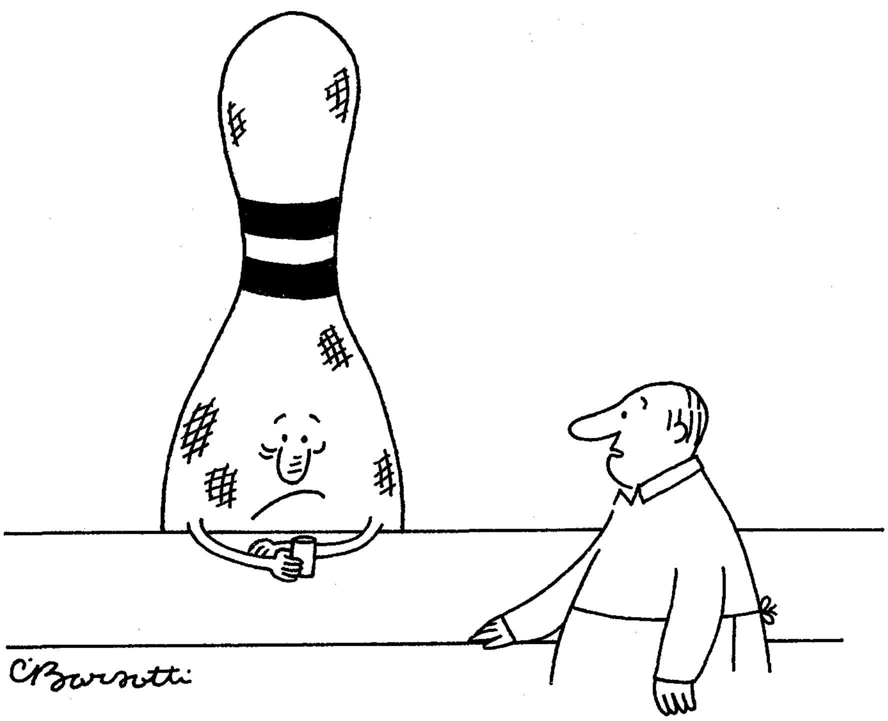
intermittent scrutiny by U.N. weapons inspectors. Chemical weapons were produced at Al Fallujah during the nineteen-eighties and nineties and may or may not have been made inoperative or harmless. We stopped in front of the Khandhari mosque, a yellow brick building with an ornately tiled turquoise-yellow-and-green minaret. The mosque is almost directly across the road from the Abu Ghraib prison, and we could see a huge portrait of Saddam wearing black gangster garb next to the prison's main gate. Officially, the prison has been empty since last October, but I had heard that it is up and running again. A dusty bazaar was nearby, with sidewalk venders and truckstop teahouses. It was not hard to imagine the place as an old caravanserai, or way station, in the days of camels and horse carts.

Sheikh Dhari's family was at noon prayers in the mosque, and we waited for them for about an hour. Three old men in traditional robes and checked head scarves came out—the Sheikh's grandsons—and the minder explained that I had come to hear their family's story of the killing of Leachman. They invited me to their home, a couple of low buildings surrounded by date palms just off the main road, and led me into the *diwaniya*, a long rectangular meeting room lined with tea tables and cheaply tapestried sofas and chairs. The three elders—Sheikh Muther Khameez Al-Dhari, seventy-one; Sheikh Abdul Wahab Khameez Al-Dhari, seventy-two; and Sheikh Taher Khameez Al-Dhari, seventy-five—pulled up chairs next to me. Sheikh Muther, a hefty, mostly toothless man, spoke first. He belted out his version of the famous story in a truculent tone, and his brothers immediately indicated that they disagreed with him. The eldest, Sheikh Taher, a distinguished-looking man with a fine gold-embroidered robe and decorated walking stick, looked at his brother stonily and said nothing. Sheikh Abdul Wahab turned away from Taher and rolled his eyes. Muther stomped out angrily, but he returned a few moments later. Abdul Wahab then took the floor but was soon interrupted by Muther. This was all going on in Arabic, with my minder, Muslim, finding it quite beyond his abilities to translate, but I heard the name Leachman mentioned a lot. Muslim wrote down what they said, and occasionally asked them questions, but he seemed bewildered. "They are old men, and each has his story," he said. The bickering continued. Finally, wordlessly and with a great display of dignity, Taher removed himself, walking away to sit with some other relatives in the room. A dozen or so sons and nephews and grandsons of the old sheikhs had gathered to listen, and, as their elders quarrelled, they smiled and shook their heads.

One of the younger relatives, who spoke English, sat down next to me. He said that his name was Abdul Razaq, and he asked me whether I was a Christian or a Jew. When I told him that I was of Christian origin, he smiled with relief. "I am glad," he said. "I don't like Jews." Abdul Razaq pointed to an old black-and-white photograph on the wall near a portrait of Saddam Hussein. The photograph was of Sheikh Dhari, he said. The face had been crudely touched up to represent an angelic-looking man, rather like the old-fashioned renderings of Joseph in illustrated Bible stories for children. His hands were folded pacifically on his knees. Like his grandsons, he was bearded and wore a robe and a head scarf.

During a lunch of rice, red beans, grilled chicken, and salad, served on a tablecloth laid out on the floor, Muslim gave me the gist of what the old men had said. They claimed that Leachman was thwarting efforts by several sheikhs in the Middle Euphrates, including Sheikh Dhari, to gain independence from British rule. Leachman had accused the Sheikh of supporting a gang of bandits and had made a rendezvous with him at a police station near the Sheikh's home. Sheikh Dhari went to the meeting, but he brought several relatives with him. The two men quarrelled, and while they were standing at the doorway, the Sheikh signalled his relatives to shoot. Leachman was wounded in the leg, and Sheikh Dhari stabbed him with his sword and killed him. Sheikh Dhari fled to Turkey, and the Arab tribes revolted. A price was put on the Sheikh's head. He was captured a few years later by a British spy and brought back to Baghdad, where he died in a hospital after being injected with poison.

This version of events is remarkably similar to the way the story was told in "Clash of Loyalties," a film made by British and Iraqi producers in 1983. Leachman, played by Oliver Reed, is a drunken, cold-hearted cynic who says things like "Killing and intimidation are my job, and I do it well." Sheikh Dhari is a tragic hero. He gallops off into exile after his daring feat, but years later, when he is old and sick, he is lured back to Iraq, betrayed,



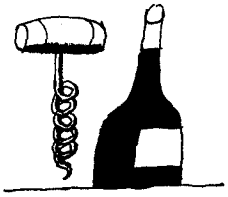
"Have you ever considered another line of work?"

and murdered. In the final scene, the Sheikh's casket is followed by thousands of angry mourners who pass by the British Legation, where diplomats look on smugly. The image right before the credits shows spouting oil wells and flames.

Back in the *diwaniya*, over tea, Sheikh Muther became agitated. "Leachman was trying to make war between the people in Iraq in order to get what he wanted," he yelled. "Tell America not to attack! I am a warrior just like Sheikh Dhari, and I will defend my country bravely." He chuckled and grinned and grabbed me in an affectionate-seeming embrace. Once our clinch was broken, I asked Muther what lessons the Americans should draw from the British experience, and Abdul Razaq spoke up. "We learned many lessons about how to defend ourselves from any kind of occupation. The Americans and British cannot occupy Iraq. Nobody can occupy Iraq."

Abdul Razaq invited me to go with him to where Leachman was killed, in an old yellow brick building with arched windows and a single doorway, set back from the road amid eucalyptus trees and a warren of mud hovels. It had been the Turkish police station, he said, and during Leachman's time it was requisitioned by the British. A family was living there now, and I saw a young man and a few small children inside. A central passageway led past dark, vaulted chambers to a courtyard paved with stones. Beyond several arches lay a kind of open stable block, where a large white goose wandered around. Before we left the house, Abdul Razaq stopped me, just inside the great front door. "This is the spot where Leachman was killed—right here," he said. Abdul Razaq pointed to an old tree that stood about a hundred feet away and said that was where the relatives with guns waited. I told him I was very impressed that Leachman could have been shot from such a distance, standing inside a darkened doorway, with Sheikh Dhari right next to him. Abdul Razaq smiled. "Remember," he said, "Iraqis are very good warriors."

A government official in Baghdad whom I had met on previous trips to the city, a man I will call Harun, invited me to his home for dinner one evening. He seemed to have been drinking before I arrived, and greeted me effusively, with kisses on both cheeks. Harun had organized the gathering with a firmly Iraqi theme. There were about a dozen guests, including a Palestinian man and four people employed by a Scandinavian N.G.O. Harun played a lute, a beautifully crafted instrument that he said was made by the most celebrated lutemaker in Basra, and he sang two songs, a sad one about love, made famous by the late Egyptian singer Um Kalthum, and a composition of his own, which sounded like a poem. The words were in Arabic, and he explained to me that it was about lost love and a deceitful woman. Another guest, the Palestinian, said to me afterward that Harun's lute playing, which I had thought quite lovely, was "terrible," although he sang well.



We drank arrack, the Iraqi national liquor, a kind of anisette. Harun had prepared the dinner himself, in a barbecue pit in his garden. The main course was *masgouf*, Tigris River fish split open and grilled on hot coals. Throughout the evening, with a passion that seemed increasingly desperate, Harun insisted that we join him in toasts to art, music, love, peace, and friendship. The living room was filled with good-quality Iraqi modern art, along with several framed photographs of Harun with Saddam Hussein. Pointing to his sizable girth, he quipped that Saddam had advised him to lose twenty-eight kilos. He raised his glass and drank a toast to this: "To dieting!" At one point, he asked some of the guests to follow him into the garden to see his new well, dug, like many others in Baghdad recently, in preparation for the war. He showed us a pile of dried date-palm fronds he had begun storing for fuel, and jerricans of gas, for his generator in the garden. "I have everything ready, you see?" Looking up at the night sky—it was one of the moonless nights of early March—he said, "And I will be able to stand here and watch the cruise missiles going by, on their way to their targets, just like I did in 1991." He laughed again, manically, and darted off to see to his other guests.

At around midnight, Harun announced that he would, with regret, have to bring the party to an end. He was leaving the very next evening on a trip to Europe. It was a business trip; he had been invited as part of his government duties. Before he left, he added, he had to see off his wife—a beautiful, weary-looking woman—and their young daughter. They were getting on a plane to Syria. He didn't explain why, but as we left his house one of my companions told me that Harun's wife's family had recently rented a house in Damascus, and were awaiting her arrival. Like a lot of other high-ranking Baathist government officials, Harun was evacuating his family before the war started. "I don't think he'll be coming back, either," my companion said. As we drove off, Harun was standing at the gate of his driveway, calling out, "Light a candle for us. Light a candle for peace, and for the children of Iraq."

In late November, 1914, shortly after Britain declared war on the Ottoman Empire, a British expeditionary force seized Basra, and a few months later the British began moving north, toward Baghdad. They got within twenty-five miles of the city but then had to retreat to Kut, a village on the Tigris River. There, on December 3, 1915, they hunkered down, under siege from the Turks and their Arab allies. A few days later, Colonel Leachman, who had been covering the flanks of the retreating troops and was outside Kut, broke through Turkish lines to rescue some of his servants who were trapped in the village, including a young Indian boy who had become his constant companion. Leachman led a breakout with a few thousand cavalry troops. The rest of the Army was not so lucky. Ten thousand British and Indian soldiers died between the start of the march on Baghdad and the surrender in Kut in April, 1916. Twenty-three thousand more troops died trying to rescue the trapped soldiers. The survivors of the siege were sent on a death march and were press-ganged into work as laborers on a railroad line. It had been the longest and most terrible siege in the history of the British Empire.

Kut is now an ugly, down-at-the-heels town of a few hundred thousand people. To get to it from Baghdad, you drive through a flat landscape of churned-up, trash-strewn brown earth and an industrial belt of scrubby factories that eventually merges into green fields of alfalfa and small farms and stands of date palms. When I drove there in mid-March, I saw hundreds of newly bulldozed snipers' nests and sandbagged foxholes. They were fragile, rather pointless-looking defenses—a single shot from a tank would blow any one of them to smithereens. Not much else in the way of military preparation seemed to be going on. Just outside the large concrete arches and the military inspection post that serve as the gateway to Kut, we passed an Army barracks where uniformed men who seemed to be recruits were being rallied at the roadside, but there was a desultory look to their activity.

Donkey carts carrying jerricans and fresh alfalfa bobbed along on the streets of Kut. It was a springlike morning, and as I waited outside the governor's compound, where I had gone to ask permission to visit the British cemetery, I could hear children playing in a nearby schoolyard. The school let out, and a group of young boys came down the road, hopping in and out of recently dug foxholes. After an hour or so, some senior-looking officials emerged with my minder, Muslim, and we drove in a big loop around the town, past a stadium where soldiers were making more dugouts in the median strip of a boulevard, and into a scrubby area of the city, with tiny, badly built brick houses and raw sewage running down the streets. The British cemetery is a sunken square of land surrounded by buildings on three sides. A fence ran along the street in front of it, but the front gate was open, and I could see that the whole place was strewn with garbage, and about half of it was hidden behind a tall thicket of weeds. An inscription next to the front gate read, "Kut War Cemetery, 1914-1918." As I stared in dismay, the man who had guided us from the governor's office explained, through Muslim, that the poor state of the graveyard was the result of the U.N. sanctions and the lack of diplomatic relations with Great Britain. "The men who used to look after it, and who received salaries from the British, have gone," he said. "That is the reason it looks like this."

We clambered down to the cemetery grounds, over a huge pile of stinking rubbish. Women peering out of a window giggled and chattered. Some young boys sat on a wall, dangling their feet and staring at us. The stench of excrement was strong; in one spot the skin of a freshly slaughtered goat buzzed with flies. There was a dead tree with bicycle inner tubes caught in its branches. An unmarked obelisk at the center was splattered with black and yellow paint, and broken-off headstones lay everywhere. Those still standing and legible showed that most of the men who were buried here, English privates with surnames like Martin, Nicholls, Newton, and Rogers, had been killed at the height of the siege of Kut, between January and April of 1916.

When I was done poking around, I chatted with the official from the governor's office and mentioned that ten thousand soldiers had died in Kut. He smiled. "And if the Americans invade you will see many of them killed at the borders with Iraq," he said. "We are here, living in our homes, and we will defend ourselves and our country with courage, the same as people anywhere would do in our position." I asked the officer his name. He told me, with some reluctance, that it was Hassan Al-Wazaty. When I asked him his rank, he laughed and demurred: "No rank. I am just one of the people of Iraq. We are all like soldiers now."

Later, in a situation without minders or translators, I told a man who is highly placed in Baghdad that I had seen trenches and foxholes on the road to Kut, and he laughed. That was just to keep people busy doing things, he said. It was obvious that the regime did not intend to defend anything but Baghdad itself. The Republican Guard and the Special Republican Guard had been pulled to Baghdad from the south and the north and had been dispersed throughout the city, in civilian areas. This seemed like a foolhardy policy to him, but there it was. "If everything else is gone," he said, "then why fight for Baghdad? What is the point in that?"

Colonel Leachman was buried in an unmarked grave in Al Fallujah, among the bodies of other soldiers who had fallen in the Arab rebellion. Leachman's body was disinterred in 1921 and reburied in Baghdad, in the North Gate War Cemetery, in the Bab al Mouatham neighborhood. The graveyard is a dusty fifteen-acre oblong with rows of regimental tombstones, and open spaces where the ashes of Muslim and Hindu soldiers lie. It is dotted with the odd plinth and funereal obelisk and bisected by a row of forlorn-looking date palms. The Turkish Embassy is across the street. Several laborers were working on a new guardhouse when Khalid, the minder who was soon to abscond to his home in Karbala, and I visited. One of the laborers unlocked the gate and pointed to General Maude's imposing domed stone mausoleum at the center of the grounds. "That's where most of the visitors go," he said. We walked toward it, passing an obelisk inscribed with the message, in English and Sanskrit, "God is One—His is the Victory: In Memory of the brave Hindus and Sikhs who sacrificed their lives in the Great War for their King and their Country." Etched into a large limestone plinth nearby were the words "Their Name Liveth for Evermore."

Some of the headstones had broken off, and lay toppled and neglected. Those still standing were etched with Christian crosses and regimental insignias: an elephant and palm for the Ceylon Sanitary Corps, a castle standard for the Essex Regiments, and a stag's head for the Seaforth Highlanders. The headstone for 201775 Private S. Brown of the Dorsetshire Regiment, who died on September 28, 1917, at the age of twenty-five, bore the words "Peace, Perfect Peace." Many of the graves were anonymous and were inscribed with the same message: "Four Soldiers of the Great War—Known Unto God." The casket in General Maude's mausoleum bore the epitaph "He Fought a Good Fight and Kept the Faith." A plaque identifying him was covered with graffito markings in Arabic, the names of Iraqi boys: Jassim, Muhammad, Shakir . . .

As we were walking out of the cemetery, we passed an obelisk with the inscription "Here are the honoured Turkish soldiers who fell for their country in the Great War, 1914-1918." When I pointed this out to Khalid, he seemed confused, and I explained that the obelisk had been erected by the British to honor their enemies. He smirked. "So, the British have honor!" he said, and he walked away, then turned back. "Maybe they will do the same for us, after they have killed us. Thank you very much." ♦

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SHOUTS & MURMURS

MY OSCAR SPEECH

BY NOAH BAUMBACH

Notes on what to say if I win the Oscar pool tonight at Chris and Linda's:

Thank Chris and Linda for the lovely spread. Say something like "Seriously, I would've thought the apple tart was from Balthazar—it was so flaky!"

Then remark on what a surprise this has all been, and how, when you lost best supporting actress so early in the night, you thought you were done for. (If you got that one, i.e., if Meryl Streep wins, pick a category you lost, like animated short film. Maybe say, "What was I thinking, going with 'Mt. Head' over 'The Chubbchubbs!'?")

Say that to be in the same category as Fred and Janice, who've gone twenty-two for twenty-four categories three years running, is a great honor. (How Janice had the foresight to pick Marcia Gay Harden in 2001 you'll never know.) Then say what a good year it was for movies, unusually good—pause for the grumbling—then mention a foreign film that played in one theatre for a week which you know no one there has heard of. (Figure out what this film is and read a summary on the Internet.)

Joke about the fact that you're glad you upped the bets to five dollars from three this year. Then tell Morris and Laura you'll pay for the cab back to the Village. Thank Nancy for her support, cite that Nicole Kidman was her pick, too. Suggest she call the kids at home and tell them to go to bed now. Hold for laughter. If joke doesn't play, go for a fail-safe and make a cheap reference to the E! red-carpet pre-show. Acknowledge your competition. Assuming it's Fred and Janice who came in second, add Hector and call the three of them the Axis of Evil.

Remark how only last March you arrived half an hour late (missing Barbara Walters entirely) because the subway went out of service at DeKalb, and about how you'd lost your lucky seat on the couch to Eleanor and were forced to sit on the rug. You came in seventh ("In the Bedroom" for best picture?) and then had that terrible fight with Nancy in front of everyone over the difference between sound and sound editing. (You were right, for the record, just not firm on the science.)

Flatter Fred again, say how often you've practiced in the bathroom mirror and wondered what it'd be like to stand here holding that salad bowl full of money. Note how much heavier the salad bowl is than you had imagined. Wonder aloud how someone (probably Morris) failed to pick a documentary called "Twin Towers." (If it doesn't win, modify. It'll win.) Then acknowledge your great respect for Eleanor for going out on a limb with "Hey Arnold! The Movie" as a write-in for best animated film.

Do the Gollum imitation that killed at Café Loup a couple of weeks ago. Congratulate everyone assembled for the evening-long restraint (two years running) they showed in not making a single "I Am Sam" joke. Then suggest we give Eleanor an honorary award (maybe toss her a couple of bucks) because she's always game to make a beer run.

Take another moment to compliment Chris and Linda on their toned-down and dignified Oscar celebration. Say that in light of recent events it's hard to take awards like these seriously, but add how important the movies are in times like these. Cite that obscure foreign film again and cull some further wisdom from whatever that film's Internet synopsis is.

Then grab the dough in your fist, ask Chris not to drown you out with music the way he did Hector five Oscars ago. A little hitch in the voice is O.K. Thrust your arm in the air, take a breath, and say simply, "No war in Iraq!" (If Susan Sarandon said anything like this, pick a position on a different current event which most people in the room will share.) ♦

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ONWARD AND UPWARD WITH THE ARTS

NOTHING FANCY

Clint Eastwood makes two new films his way.

BY LILLIAN ROSS

Clint Eastwood recently began directing a new feature film, "Mystic River," but, just days before starting, he embarked on making "Piano Blues," one of seven parts of a documentary about the blues which Martin Scorsese is producing for public television. Eastwood was going to shoot "Mystic River" in Boston, but he got his blues film under way at the Mission Ranch, an inn that he owns in Carmel, on California's Monterey Peninsula, where he also owns a great deal of other property. Out there, he seemed to be oblivious to the frantic pressures that usually overwhelm key figures in an imminent big-time movie production, like the one awaiting him in Boston.

"Nobody pushes Clint," said Bruce Ricker, the producer of "Piano Blues," and one of Eastwood's battalion of longtime helpers. "Clint does what Clint decides to do in his own good time." Ricker is a bulky, fast-talking man who helped produce Eastwood's "Thelonius Monk: Straight, No Chaser." As soon as Ricker arrived at the Mission Ranch—leading camera, sound, and lighting crews—he nervously scurried off to look for a baby grand piano that was to have been installed in the inn's former dairy barn, which is now used for weddings and parties.

Eastwood was already there, standing casually, six feet four inches tall, hands in his pockets, and watching a piano tuner plinking the keys. At seventy-two, he looks youthful, with bright-green eyes and high color in his cheeks. His hair is gray and white, full and uncombed, and that day he had on nondescript, loose-fitting gray pants, a tan cotton windbreaker, sneakers, and a blue-and-gray striped polo shirt, manufactured by his own clothing line, Tehāma.

He had driven over from his home in nearby Pebble Beach, where he lives with his thirty-seven-year-old wife, Dina; their six-year-old daughter, Morgan; their year-old pink-and-black pig, Penelope; three chickens; a fat black-and-white rat named Whiskers, who has ten new babies and a much older mate, Norbert; and a caged twenty-something yellow-naped Amazon-green female parrot named Paco, who likes to say, among other things, "Happy birthday" and "I love you."

Eastwood greeted Ricker with a calm nod and a grin. "Piano sounds O.K.," he said.

Ricker looked somewhat reassured. "Everybody's here," he said quickly. "The crew is unloading the equipment and will be setting up. Pinetop Perkins and Jay McShann"—the Chicago bluesman and the Kansas City jazz player—"are both here. They made it."

Eastwood grinned again, and gave the piano a pat.

"Pinetop looks good; he's eighty-nine, you know," Ricker said.

"Eighty-nine?" Eastwood said. "I wonder what he eats."

Ricker looked as though he'd just been paid a personal compliment. "And Jay is eighty-six," he said.

"We'll have some good Kansas City and Chicago stuff," Eastwood said. "We'll try to find out who influenced the great players—blues, boogie, and beyond."

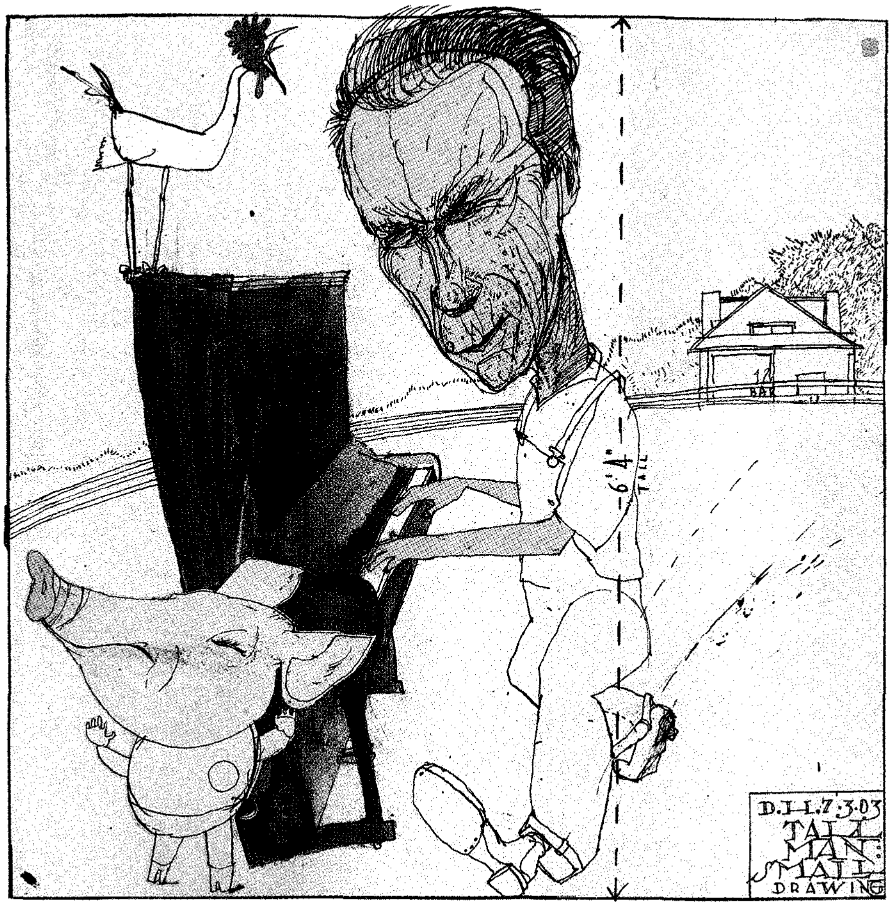
"We're bringing Pinetop and Jay to meet each other for the first time," Ricker said eagerly. "They never played together before."

"I always felt that jazz is the only original art form we have," Eastwood said. "It was very influential in creating the blues, and even rock is a spinoff."

"The blues tempo is the connecting link," Ricker said. "It's what both Pinetop and Jay come out of. We can establish that in the film."

"I want to keep it pure," Eastwood said. "Let the music speak for itself. Nothing fancy."

Mission Ranch sits on twenty-two acres of meadowland overlooking the Pacific Ocean, at the mouth of the Carmel River. Half a dozen chubby sheep graze dreamily on the meadow. Eastwood bought the place in 1986; it was built in the eighteen-fifties and has gone through various incarnations, including a dairy ranch and an officers' club during the Second World War. Eastwood rescued it from developers. The guest quarters are in small, renovated white clapboard cottages that resemble dollhouses, with paned windows, white lace curtains, flower boxes, and high-backed white rocking chairs on porches overlooking the sheep. Pinetop Perkins was accommodated in the Honeymoon Cottage.



"If it weren't fun, I wouldn't be doing it," Eastwood says.

DAVID HUGHES

Eastwood had crossed into the new century with some forty films on his résumé, several of them produced and directed by him, and some with music composed by him. On March 9th, he received the Screen Actors Guild Life Achievement Award. He has come a long way from his "Dirty Harry" roles of the nineteen-seventies. Among other things, he directed and played opposite Meryl Streep in "The Bridges of Madison County." For that, he composed the theme "Doe Eyes," which became very popular, and which telephone callers to the Mission Ranch are obliged to listen to when they are put on hold.

Ricker told Eastwood that they could start filming late that afternoon, and then the two climbed into Eastwood's 1976 Mercedes sedan. "Let's go to my house," Eastwood said. "Mumsy will be there. She's ninety-four. Mumsy and I talk every night on the telephone. Last night, I took her to dinner at my golf club; it's called the Tehāma, too, after an extinct tribe of California Indians. I built it three years ago because it was so difficult to get tee times at the Pebble Beach club."

On the way, Eastwood stopped at a wooden shack in Carmel Valley that looked like a leftover from one of his "Unforgiven" sets. A sign on the roof read "Hacienda Hay and Feed." The proprietor, a spare fellow with spectacles, also looked left over from an Eastwood film set.

"Do you have one of those water bottles for animals?" Eastwood asked politely. "Where's George?" he said, looking around. "I don't see George."

"Dunno, haven't seen him," the proprietor said.

Eastwood walked over to a back door leading into a small yard. A goat munching on something lifted its head immediately and bounded over to him. Eastwood petted it, murmuring something friendly, then turned away. "Ah, there's George!" he said, raising his voice slightly for the first time that day. He bent down and picked up a spectacularly clean white rooster. "Glad to see you, George," he said, cradling the chicken against his chest. He set George down gently on the ground and went back inside to the proprietor, who handed him the bottle and said it cost three dollars and twenty-three cents. Eastwood counted out three dollar bills and a quarter, slowly picked up two pennies in change, and, clutching the bottle, headed back to his car.

The baby bottle, he said, was for Whiskers and her ten babies. "Dina is sort of an animal freak," he said. "Penelope, our pig, was the sick runt of a litter. Dina thought she was going to die, so she brought the pig into the house, and now Penelope is so strong and bold. When she was in the house, she would always be pushing our furniture around, out of place, from one room to the other." He looked very content, driving slowly. "Dina is everything I ever wanted and never found anywhere before," he said. "I'm very lucky. I've got a great girl. She's completely unselfish," he said, with a sudden passion. "It was a wonderful romance. We went together four or five months. Then I knew I could get married again. Instinctively, I knew she was the right person. I was never a guy on a white horse. She's a self-feeder."

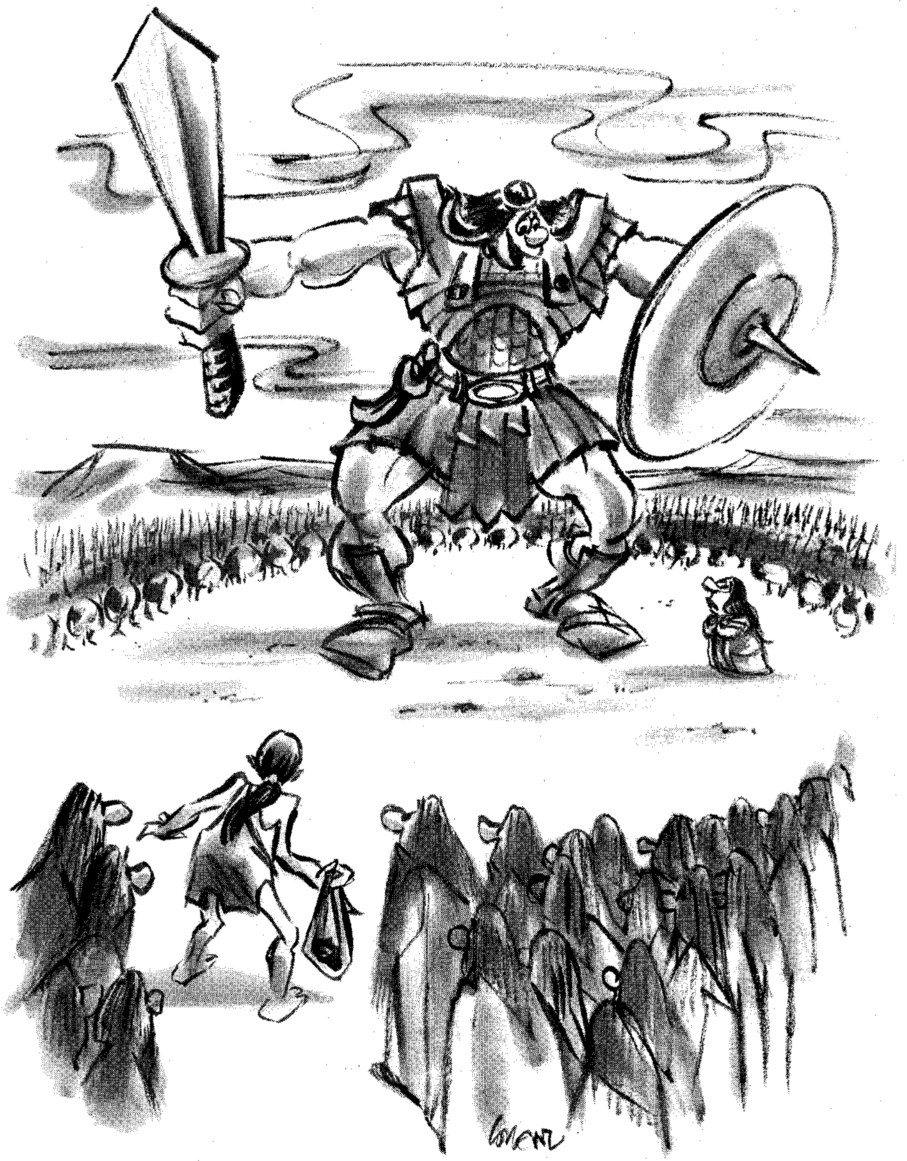
The former Dina Ruiz is Eastwood's second wife. When they met, she was working as a news anchor at an NBC TV affiliate. His first wife was the former Maggie Johnson, whom he married in 1953, when he was twenty-one. They divorced thirty years later. They have two children—Kyle, now thirty-four, a jazz bassist, and Alison, thirty, an actress, who recently posed for *Playboy*. Eastwood has several other children: Kimber, thirty-eight, the daughter of Roxanne Tunis, is married and lives with her husband;

Scott, seventeen, and Katie, fifteen, live with their mother, Jacelyn Reeves, in Hawaii; and Francesca, who is now nine, is the daughter he had with the actress Frances Fisher. “Dina has embraced everybody,” Eastwood said. “She brought the whole family together, with no territorial demands, no big ego, none of that. Francesca and Morgan are great friends. The kiddies—and their mothers—visit each other regularly. I take some of the kids, and Mumsy, too, on our vacations, to Sun Valley or Hawaii, wherever. That’s the way Dina feels it should be.”

He headed for Pebble Beach, passing several thousand of his own acres here and there. “I never bought any real estate I didn’t really like,” he said. “I like land, the land out here. I first came here when I was twenty-one and stationed at Fort Ord. I liked it. When everybody was going crazy with stocks and investments not long ago, I stayed with the land. I like the tangible. I like to enjoy things, and I enjoy this land.”

He ran for mayor of Carmel, and won, in 1986, he said, because he didn’t like the way the City Council was handling land, building, and water problems. He served for two years. “I enjoyed it,” he said. “I enjoyed presiding over the council meetings, repairing the roads, deciding on water allotments. I liked doing things for people who can’t stand up for themselves.”

Eastwood’s house—with eight rooms, two pianos, and a fully equipped gym—is a one-story, seventy-five-year-old adobe-and-wood hacienda, with a courtyard that encircles a huge oak and a stand of eucalyptus and palm trees. He parked alongside a black GMC pickup truck, circa 1951, that was, he explained, the one he drove in “The Bridges of Madison County.” One of the doors still bore the name of the character he played: “Robert Kincaid—Photographer—Bellingham, Washington.”



“Don’t worry, Ma—I’m too big to fail.”

Eastwood’s appearance in the kitchen, where Paco the parrot greeted him with repeated “I love you”s, didn’t seem to slow down the lunch preparations that were under way. He introduced Dina, an ebullient, dark-haired woman. Morgan, a curly-haired miniature of her mother, was helping her make a huge salad. Dina’s mother, a pretty, red-haired youngish woman, was cooking cheese quesadillas. Eastwood’s sister, Jeanne, with her husband, was preparing a platter of rice and beans. His mother, Ruth, alert and trim in a gray warmup suit, was smiling benevolently at everybody. Additional husbands, some wearing pastel-colored pants with conservative, long-sleeved shirts, materialized. The dishes were placed, buffet style, on available countertops.

Eastwood took his plate to a corner of the kitchen table, sat down, and pointed to the rats’ cage nearby. “I put up the bottle,” he said softly to his wife.

“Daddy gives the rats vegetables the way he does us,” Morgan said.

“Clint believes in eating vegetables, fruits and vegetables,” Dina said. “He’s the first one up every morning. He makes fruit smoothies for himself and everybody else.”

“He makes a waffle for me,” Morgan said. “And a smoothie.”

“Clint believes every animal should eat what we eat—the pig, the parrot, the rats,” Dina said. “He believes a bug has as much right to be on this earth as anybody else.”

Eastwood, chewing, looked thoughtful.

“He’s been this way all his life,” Ruth Eastwood said. “One time, he had thirteen snakes. When he was four, we discovered he was allergic to dogs and cats, so he collected snakes. I guess he’s kind of a supernatural person.”

“My grandmother had a small farm, where I stayed as a boy,” Eastwood said. “Sometimes when you move a lot as a little kid, animals are your best friends. Animals just like you for you.”

He looked at his wristwatch and, motioning to Bruce Ricker, said there was time, before the filming for “Piano Blues” started, to look in on the Forty-fifth Annual Monterey Jazz Festival, which was taking place that weekend at the Monterey Fairgrounds, a short drive away. Ricker said that Marcia Ball, the blues pianist and vocalist, and the jazz pianist Dave Brubeck would be there, and they could try to find them and remind them to come over to the Mission Ranch for the filming. Neither Pinetop Perkins nor Jay McShann had ever met Dave Brubeck.

“If we get them playing together, it will also show the timelessness of the blues,” Ricker said. “Maybe we’ll even get some four-handed stuff!”

“That’s the idea,” Eastwood said.

Back at the Mission Ranch later that afternoon, Perkins and McShann were in the former milk barn, waiting near the piano. They were similarly attired, in white shirts and dark-blue suits. Perkins, dark-complexioned, with a white brush mustache and large round eyeglasses, was impish and restless, and had a black fedora perched on his head, along with a necktie decorated with a piano-key motif. McShann, who has light-brown skin, walked with the help of a cane. Both men watched alertly as the crew got lights, camera, and sound equipment ready.

Ricker told Eastwood that some of the other directors of Scorsese’s blues series were shooting with handheld cameras, and using gels and smoke for atmosphere. Eastwood said he didn’t want any gimmicks. “A good recording of the music is the most important thing,” he said.

He pulled on a blue blazer over his sports shirt and walked over to the piano. Nodding a “Let’s go!” to the crew, he sat down at the piano, beside Pinetop Perkins.

“Pinetop, you look fantastic!” he said. “You got a diet I should follow?”

“Heh-heh-heh!” Pinetop laughed, his face breaking up into dozens of creases. He pushed his fedora up on his head a bit, sat down at the piano, and fingered out a sharp, attention-getting “Shave and a haircut, two bits!” Eastwood laughed along with him and then began to ask deferential questions about the origin of the piano blues.

“We’re trying to find out who the great influences were,” he said.

Pinetop gave answers in words and in music. “My real name is Joe Willie Perkins,” he said. “I used to listen to Pinetop Smith playin’ his ‘Boogie Woogie.’ I tell ya, he was great, so when he died I took the name Pinetop.”

“My idea of something to do when I was a kid was to put on Jay McShann playing ‘Hot Biscuits,’ ” Eastwood said. “Didn’t Tommy Dorsey take Pinetop Smith’s ‘Boogie Woogie’—sort of ripped it off, as I recall? Dorsey made a record of it, and it was a big hit.”

“Yeh, heh-heh,” Pinetop responded, and then he played some boogie and sang, “Come back, baby, please don’t go . . . ”

He stopped and said that he couldn’t get the bass notes rolling with his left hand, because, some years ago, a woman had stabbed him in that hand.

Eastwood said that he couldn’t get the bass notes rolling in his left hand, either. “And I wasn’t even stabbed,” he said, laughing.

When Jay McShann sat down at the piano, he showed how he got a steady rhythm going with his left hand while improvising with his right.

McShann said that he was born in Muskogee, Oklahoma. He told Eastwood, “My dad worked in a furniture store, and he’d bring his truck home, and there’d be broken records in it. One day, I picked up the pieces of a broken record and stuck them together. That’s how I heard Bessie Smith for the first time, singin’ ‘Backwater Blues.’ That particular record, with her hollerin’, ‘I can’t move no more. . . . There ain’t no place for a poor old girl to go.’ It got to me. It sure sounded good to me.”

Eastwood said, “When I was a kid, my mother, when Fats Waller died, brought home his records and said, ‘That’s what I call real piano playing.’ I listened to ‘Your Feet’s Too Big’ and ‘Ain’t Misbehavin’ ’ for the first time. I was always trying to save up money to

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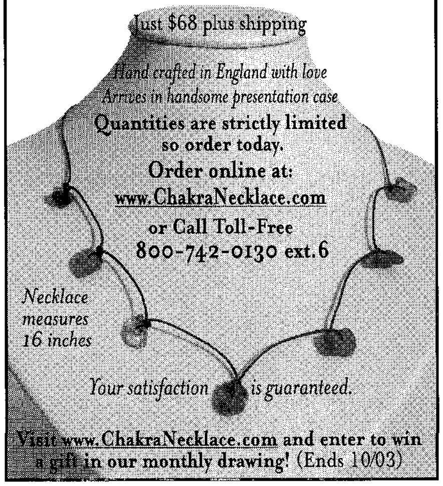

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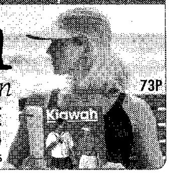

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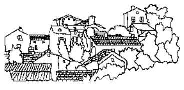

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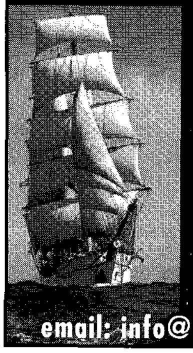

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go to Fifty-second Street in New York, but I never could. Give us a taste, Jay. 'Hootie's Blues.' "

With a very light touch, in contrast to Pinetop's barrelhouse, McShann played and sang:

She calls me her lover
And I beg her to
Ain't you sorry
That little girl ain't you?

Then he played another version and sang, "She called me her lover; she called me her beggar, too . . ."

"I know those words," Eastwood said, laughing again. "I've used them. I've been in that position many times. You don't know how many lovely young ladies I've met by being able to copy your playing."

McShann started again, improvising.

"Beautiful," Eastwood said. He put his hand on McShann's upper back and rubbed it. "Would you describe yourself as happy, Jay?"

"Pretty much," McShann said. "But sometimes you can't see for lookin'."

They both went "Heh-heh-heh," and gave each other understanding looks.

Two weeks later, Eastwood was in Boston, directing "Mystic River." He planned to pick up "Piano Blues" again in a few months, when he would be going to New Orleans. After that, Ricker said, they would film Ray Charles, in his studio in Los Angeles. In the meantime, ensconced in Boston's Ritz-Carlton hotel, Eastwood said that he could still hear the blues playing in the back of his head, as he contemplated what he might want to do with the score for "Mystic River."

"I can do quite a bit simultaneously," he said. "As soon as I can get back to my piano at home, I may write some music of my own that will be suitable for this movie."

During the seven-week "Mystic River" shoot, Eastwood regularly spent an hour, after a day's filming, in the hotel's gym, where, among other routines, he bench-pressed two hundred pounds. As soon as he arrived in Boston, he went to a whole-foods market and stocked up on health foods. He installed a blender and a refrigerator in his hotel suite, and made smoothies every morning. When Dina and Morgan visited, a few weeks into the filming, he made smoothies for them, too.

"Mystic River" is a co-production of Warner Bros. and Eastwood's company, Malpaso, a Spanish word that means "bad step"; it was named after a creek in Carmel. His crew included many people who had worked with him during the past thirty years.

"They know the shorthand," he said.

Nobody ever broached the subject of Eastwood's retiring. He told me that he once discussed the topic with Jack Nicholson.

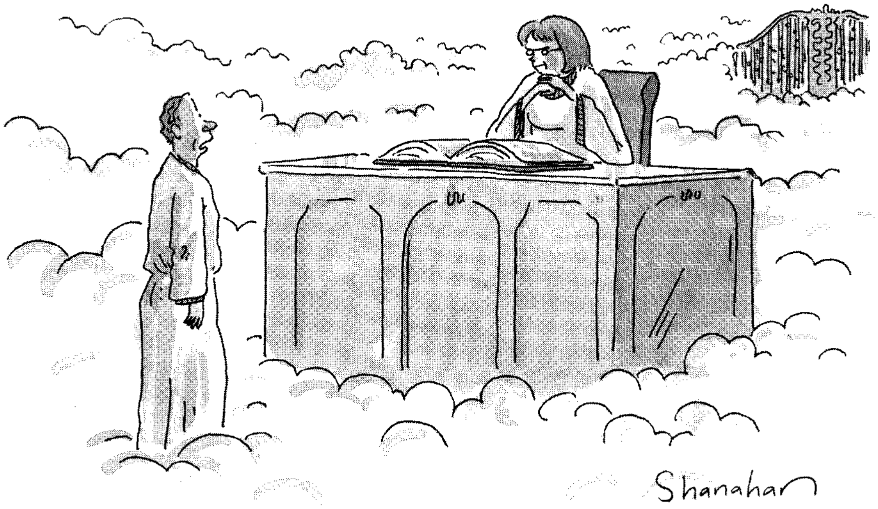
"About ten years ago. I was with Jack, driving out to the golf range," he said. "Jack said he was going to do just one more movie, 'The Crossing Guard,' and that would be his last. I said I would do 'In the Line of Fire' and 'A Perfect World,' and that would be it. Well, he went on to act in about ten more movies, and I went on to act in or direct six more." Then he grinned and added, "They keep saying yes to you, so you keep on going."

"Mystic River" centers on three working-class friends—Jimmy, played by Sean Penn; Dave, by Tim Robbins; and Sean, by Kevin Bacon—and how their lives have been haunted by an incident of sexual abuse in the past.

"These actors are so good and so enthusiastic, and they've all worked and prepared so hard, it's for me alone to screw up," he said. "There are so many characters, and the story weaves back and forth in time, so those are the only difficult aspects for me to deal with. I stay close to the impression of the story I got when I first read it. Sometimes embellishments just come. The actors bring them to me.

"I've even learned from my screenwriters. Seventeen years ago, when I produced, directed, and starred in 'Heartbreak Ridge,' as Marine Gunnery Sergeant Tom Highway training a platoon of jarheads, I say, 'You improvise! You adapt! You overcome!' Helpful words to remember. I always equate a movie director with a platoon leader: he's only as good as the cast and crew behind him."

Someone on the set asked Eastwood how it felt to produce and direct the film, but not to act in it.



"Helen! Well, I'll be damned."

• •

"It feels great!" he said. "This is much more fun. As an actor, I'm constantly being fiddled with. I'm being told, 'You gotta do this, you gotta do that.' Somebody is always fussing over my hair, somebody else is tampering with my skin. I'm told to go to wardrobe and put on these clothes or those other clothes. Here, I come to the set in my T-shirt and jeans and sneakers, and nobody cares what I look like. I'm getting the scenes I want, and it makes me very happy. I'm free, free of extra pressure, the constant worry over how I'm doing and what I'm doing. As the director, I want to be watching my actors—it's fun to watch the emotions in my actors unfold. If it weren't fun, I wouldn't be doing it."

One day, while directing "Mystic River," Eastwood watched Sean Penn do a scene in which Penn's character comes upon the body of his murdered teen-age daughter. The members of the crew who were watching were visibly shaken by the performance. Someone asked Eastwood how he felt about the shot.

"It's important to follow what you have in mind," he said. "I try to get what I have in mind, but if an actor does what *he* has in his mind, and if it's anything like what I just saw here with Sean, I'm very grateful to take it. It's like going to a store and looking at all the suits on the rack and seeing one that makes you feel, 'That's exactly what I have in mind.' I never had to work with someone like a Marilyn Monroe, who, I've heard, made everybody wait three hours before showing up, that sort of thing—that would drive me fruitcake."

The actors seemed grateful, too. "He's the least disappointing icon in American film," Sean Penn said.

"The actors have never been on a set like this before," one of Eastwood's longtime assistants said. "Nobody's yelling. Nobody calls out, 'Lights! Camera! Action!' Once in a while Clint says, '*Actione*,' perhaps as a tribute to his Sergio Leone days. Usually, he just kind of mutters, 'Go ahead.' He never shouts, or even says, 'Cut!' He just mutters, 'O.K.' or 'Stop.' "

When Eastwood is directing, instead of peering with the cinematographer through the lens, he uses a digital, battery-operated handheld monitor; it has a seven-inch screen, which is linked to the steadicam lens. In Boston, he didn't follow the usual routine of watching video playbacks on the set or having the actors watch or worry about their performances.

"It's like being on a Zen retreat," Marcia Gay Harden, who played Tim Robbins's (Dave's) wife, said. "Everything is so quiet and peaceful."

Buddy Van Horn, Eastwood's stunt coördinator, golfing partner, expert horseman, and second-unit director, started working with him in 1968, on

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the movie "Coogan's Bluff." A former stuntman, Van Horn has the kind of weather-beaten, deeply lined face that moviegoers have spotted for ages wrecking wagons, fencing in "Zorro" pictures, starting bar scuffles, and finishing fights. He has also directed some of Eastwood's films, including "Pink Cadillac" and "Any Which Way You Can." He was born on the back lot of Universal Studios, where his father worked as a veterinarian for the live animals until Buddy was two. He has seven grandchildren.

"Clint is really good with actors," Buddy says. "He knows actors' problems and lets them do their thing. If they need direction, he gives it to them."

Steve Hulsey, who has been Eastwood's driver since 1986, drove the director's nineteen-year-old motor home, a silver Prevost that he likes to use as a trailer on the set, from California to Boston, taking six days to make the trip. "It's got a queen-size bed, a kitchen, a dinette, a TV, and a VCR. We lent it to the Pope in 1984, when he visited Monterey," Hulsey said. "It's in mint condition, with only 62,768 miles on it." Everybody seemed to look upon the Prevost as a sacred family heirloom. (Alana, the twenty-three-year-old daughter of another driver, followed in Malpaso's fuel truck, a one-ton Chevy Crew Cab Dually.)

The movie's production designer, Henry Bumstead, who is eighty-eight and a winner of two Oscars—for "To Kill a Mockingbird" and "The Sting"—scouted locations for "Mystic River" last summer and built the sets for all the interiors. He is known as Bummy to the rest of the crew.

"I wouldn't be working for anyone else at my age," Bummy said. "Clint takes the B.S. out of making movies."

A common pastime on the set, during all the waiting that is an integral part of moviemaking, was swapping Clint lore: "For recreation, Clint reads medical journals." Or, "When Clint first tried to get a job at Universal, in 1953, they told him he was too tall, that his Adam's apple was too obvious." Or, "Clint flies his own helicopter. He's had it for twelve years." Or, "He jumps out of a helicopter wearing his skis."

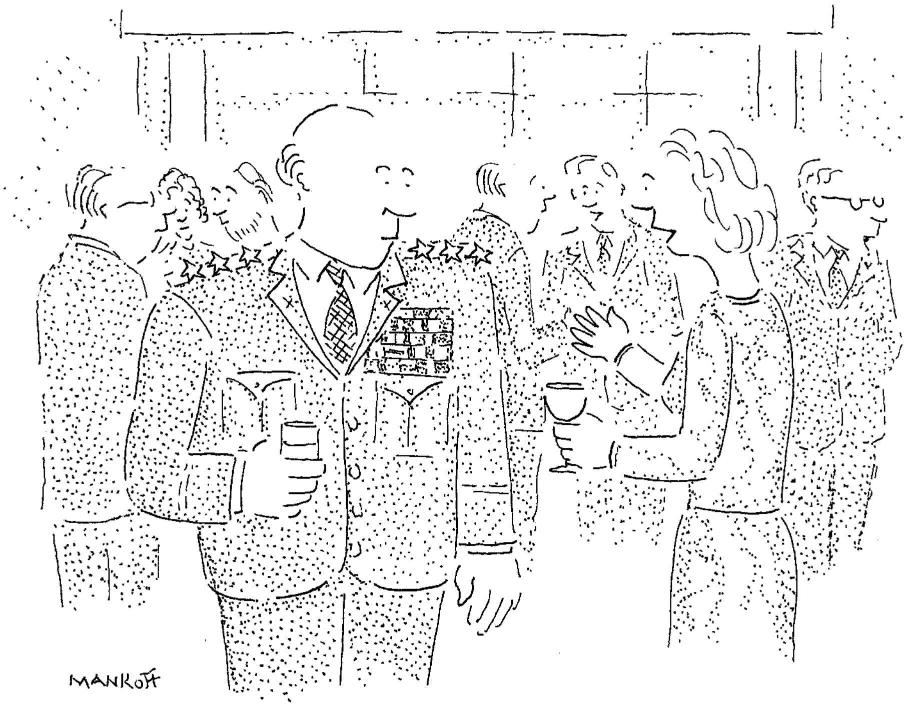
One evening after a day's work on the set, Eastwood was sitting in the hotel restaurant with some friends. He had completed his workout in the gym, had made a smoothie for himself in his room, and was nursing a single beer. Someone brought up Bummy and what he said about Eastwood taking the B.S. out of moviemaking.

"That's flattering, coming from him," Eastwood said. "I guess Bummy means all the moviemaking organization. Bummy knows his stuff. As a designer, he's still the best, still putting out, at his age. The actual ages of these people, the ones who can do what he does on that level, don't mean a thing. He knows how it was with some of the special people I worked with, too, in what might be called the great era of moviemaking. They were terrific people, like John Calley and Don Siegel. They read a lot. They knew a lot. If you asked one of them a question, you got an answer.

"Today, there are many differences. We have a lot more technology, a lot of toys to play with, but they don't necessarily do anything to make movies better. Unfortunately, today, when a movie is successful, they try to make twenty more like it," he went on. "Some people, for example, have wanted me to do 'Dirty Harry' again. Harry or Josey Wales were just characters, and they came with a dramatic situation. They weren't like me, and the less they were like me, the more fun it was to do them. However, at some point in your life that kind of thing becomes less challenging. You have to start to grow within yourself, or else you'll start going backwards. I don't understand Sylvester Stallone. I hear he's going to do 'Rocky' again. For me, it would look like you're doing it for a paycheck.

"I like to move on," he said. "I enjoyed making 'The Bridges of Madison County.' I hadn't read the book. One day, the producer Lili Zanuck called me and told me to read it. She said, 'You're in it.' I hung up. The phone rang again. It was Terry Semel, who was then co-head of Warner Bros. He said, 'There's a lot of you in the character.' So I read the book and fought my way through the fancy, pretentious writing.

"I could see the story. In my mind, however, I saw it as the woman's story. So that's what it became as a movie. What often has set me off in making a movie is a song. I did it once before, in 'Play Misty for Me.' In 'Bridges,' for the love scene in the kitchen, where I—



"I just think you're going to need a better rallying cry than 'Absence of evidence isn't evidence of absence.' "

the photographer, Robert Kincaid—dance with Meryl Streep, I used the song 'I See Your Face Before Me,' by Johnny Hartman. Music often leads me into the sequence."

Eastwood gave no sign of being tired, even though other tables in the room had become deserted and he, like others in the crew, had an early-morning call. "Many people now making movies have been conditioned by television," he said. "I like using closeups. I'm fond of them. But people today use all closeups. A lot of them are claustrophobically hard to watch. They crank them in so tight I lose interest. Some of those old black-and-white movies have scope and size. My six-year-old daughter, Morgan, likes them. We were dialling around on television the other night, and we stopped on 'Mildred Pierce,' with Joan Crawford. Morgan liked that movie, especially since it had a little girl her age in it. Dina and I took her with us the other night to see 'Catch Me If You Can.' She sat there and sat there, expectantly, fifteen minutes into the movie, and then she asked, impatiently, 'When does the movie start?' She wanted some action, instead of closeups of heads. The other night, we dialled to 'In the Line of Fire' on television, and Morgan said, 'Hey! That's you!' But she didn't want to watch it."

The South Boston neighborhood people gathered in small, respectful huddles to watch "Mystic River" being filmed. They gave Eastwood dozens of T-shirts bearing the logos of local organizations—policemen, firefighters, Teamsters, Southies, Celtics, Red Sox—and he wore one to the set almost every day.

"You don't need to bring your own clothes when you work here!" Eastwood announced to his agent, Leonard Hirshan, during the latter's obligatory visit early in the filming. Hirshan regarded the T-shirts with detachment. He was neatly attired in the garb of agentry—blazer, gray flannel trousers, cashmere sweater, and well-worn white sneakers. He announced that he had given up agenting in favor of business managing, which he did exclusively for Eastwood. "In 1961, I became Clint's agent and Walter Matthau's agent, and now I'm wearing Walter's old Mephisto sneakers, which I inherited," he said. He stayed long enough to tell a number of people that the only independent moviemakers who have controlled their own pictures were Charlie Chaplin, Woody Allen, and Clint Eastwood. He reminded Sean Penn, "I used to get jobs for your father, Leo Penn." He pointed out that "Clint never says yes unless he intends to make the picture." He also stated, "I always say, 'Clint doesn't make deals, Clint makes movies.' " Then, looking around, he said, "Everything looks good here," and he left to return to Los Angeles.

Bruce Ricker, who lives in Cambridge, came to the set on every one of the production's thirty-nine days, to watch Eastwood direct and to eat lunch with the crew. (Eastwood has used the same set caterer, a Los Angeles outfit called Tony's, which leans toward steamed vegetables, for three decades.) As the filming neared the end, Ricker made a few musical suggestions for the score. Eastwood said he wanted to see what he might compose himself. "I want to write something that will be in tune with the feeling of the lives of these people," he said.

When "Mystic River" wrapped, Eastwood went home to Pebble Beach. In his office at the Mission Ranch, he worked with Joel Cox, digitally editing the footage from the movie. When they finished, Cox took it with him to Los Angeles, to have it put on film for additional editing.

One afternoon in his living room, Eastwood sat down on the bench of his Chickering baby grand and started working out possible melodies for the movie. "I was improvising one melody and fooling around with another," he said. "Then Dina came into the room to listen to what I was playing, and she said she liked the first one. So I got that one on the road. I put it in the picture. There's no jazz in it. And there's no blues. It's more on the classical side, to be played by a full orchestra, eventually—by the Boston Symphony Orchestra, as it turns out. If I had to describe it, I'd say it's something bittersweet. It's like life, where you're constantly adjusting to everything. It's all improvisation." ♦

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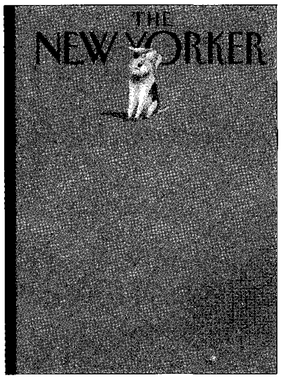

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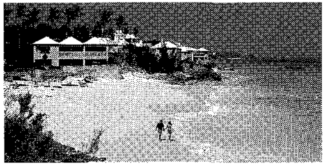

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THE PRINCE

How the Saudi Ambassador became Washington's indispensable operator.

BY ELSA WALSH

During the first weeks of the second Bush Administration, the Saudi Arabian Ambassador to the United States, Prince Bandar bin Sultan, met with the new President. Bandar, who is fifty-three and has been the Saudi Ambassador for twenty years, was accustomed to an unusually personal relationship with the White House; he was so close to the President's father, George H. W. Bush, that he was considered almost a member of the family. The Saudi Ambassador had been happy about the younger Bush's victory, but he was worn out by the unpublicized role he had played in the failed negotiations to resolve the Middle East crisis during the last weeks of the Clinton Presidency.

President Clinton had been working on a compromise for years; after the Monica Lewinsky scandal, he had called this effort part of his "personal journey of atonement." Bush had been briefed on the collapse of the talks and was baffled by Yasir Arafat, the leader of the Palestinian Authority. "Explain one thing to me," he said to Bandar. "I cannot believe somebody will not strike a deal with two desperate people."

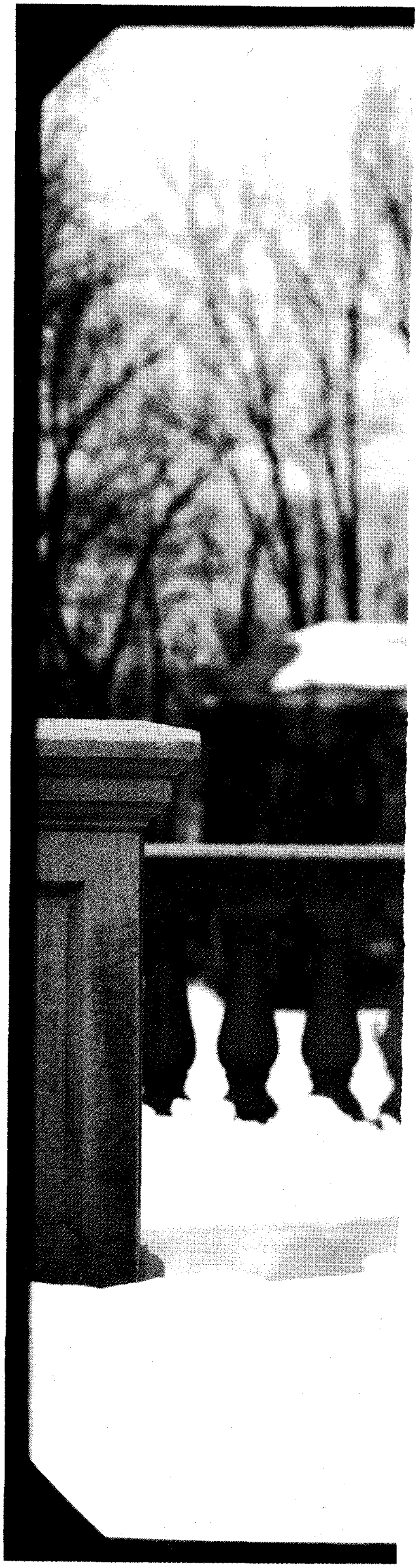
When Bandar asked what Bush meant by "desperate," Bush explained: President Clinton had been eager to leave office with a settlement in the Middle East, and Israel's Prime Minister, Ehud Barak, needed a deal to survive the next election. Bush said that he didn't think Arafat really wanted to solve the problem.

Bandar believed that Arafat's failure to accept the deal in January of 2001 was a tragic mistake—a crime, really. Yet to say so publicly would damage the Palestinian cause, which had been championed by the Saudis, who would then lose any leverage they still had. Bush told Bandar that, unlike Clinton, he did not intend to intervene aggressively.

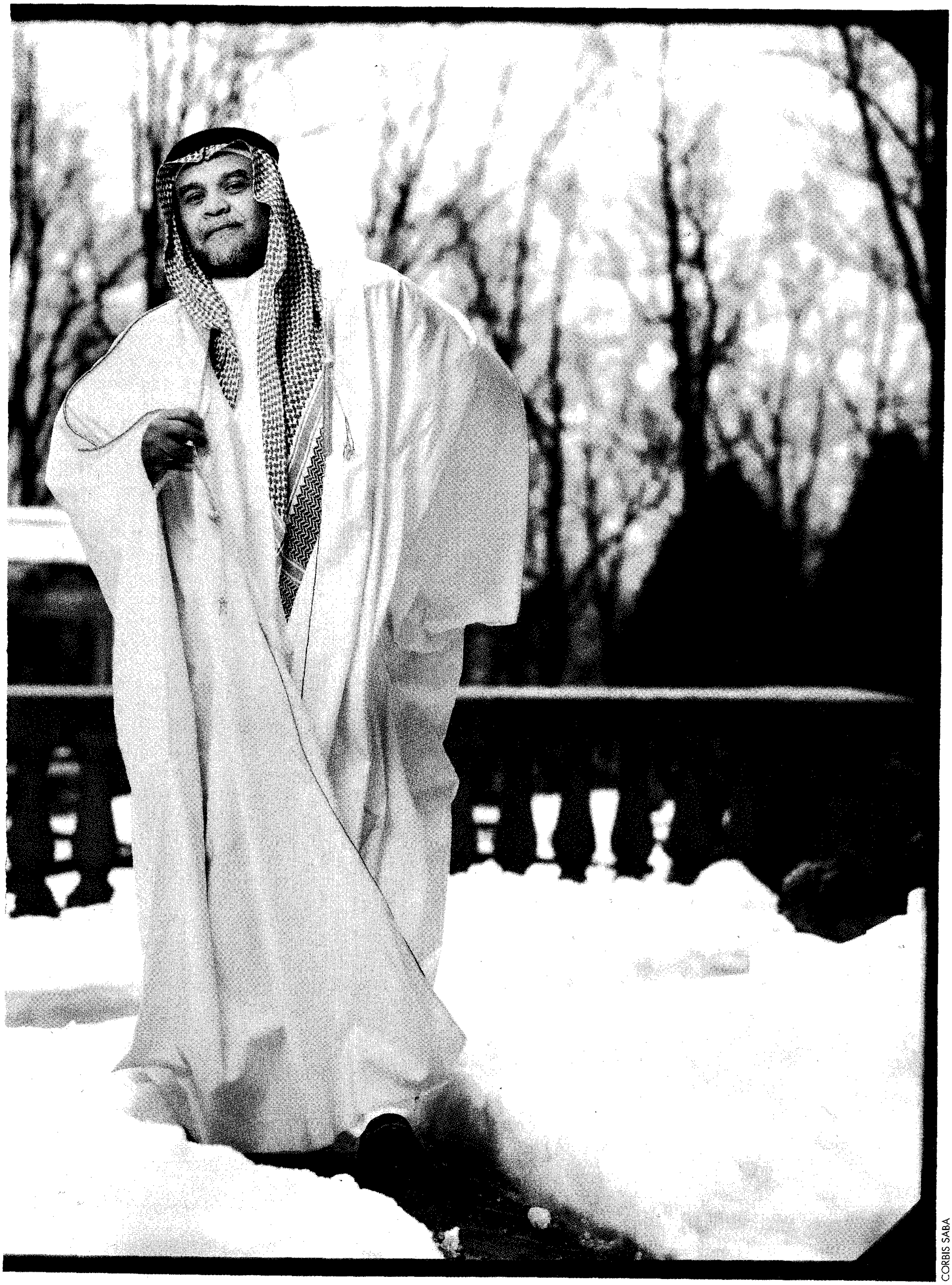
Bandar left the meeting even more distressed. At the end of the Clinton Presidency, Bandar had received confidential assurances from Colin Powell, the Secretary of State-designate, that he was to relay to Arafat: the Middle East deal made by Clinton that the new Administration endorsed would be enforced. Powell warned that the "peace process" would be different under Bush. Bush would not spend hours on the telephone, and Camp David was not going to become a motel. The message was clear, and until the end Bandar had continued to hope: it appeared that Arafat would get almost everything he wanted, and that Bush's Administration, which Bandar saw as more tough-minded than Clinton's, would stand behind the agreement.

"I still have not recovered, to be honest with you, inside, from the magnitude of the missed opportunity that January," Bandar told me at his home in McLean, Virginia. "Sixteen hundred Palestinians dead so far. And seven hundred Israelis dead. In my judgment, not one life of those Israelis and Palestinians dead is justified."

We met in late November, during Ramadan, when Muslims fast from dawn to dusk, and Bandar had invited me to break the day's fast with him. Steel barriers block the way to the house, which overlooks the Potomac River, and I had passed through a security checkpoint, where commandos in khaki pants and vests inspected my car for explosives. Bandar has a full, expressive face and a boisterous laugh. He usually wears European clothes when meeting Westerners, but on that evening he wore the traditional Saudi dress—a white caftan and sandals. He was eagerly relighting a slim cigar (smoking, too, is banned during fasting hours). On the table were nearly two dozen dishes of rice, stews,



Prince Bandar has said, "I'm proud, not ashamed, to be a friend of the United States. But I'm frustrated." Photograph by Martin Schoeller.

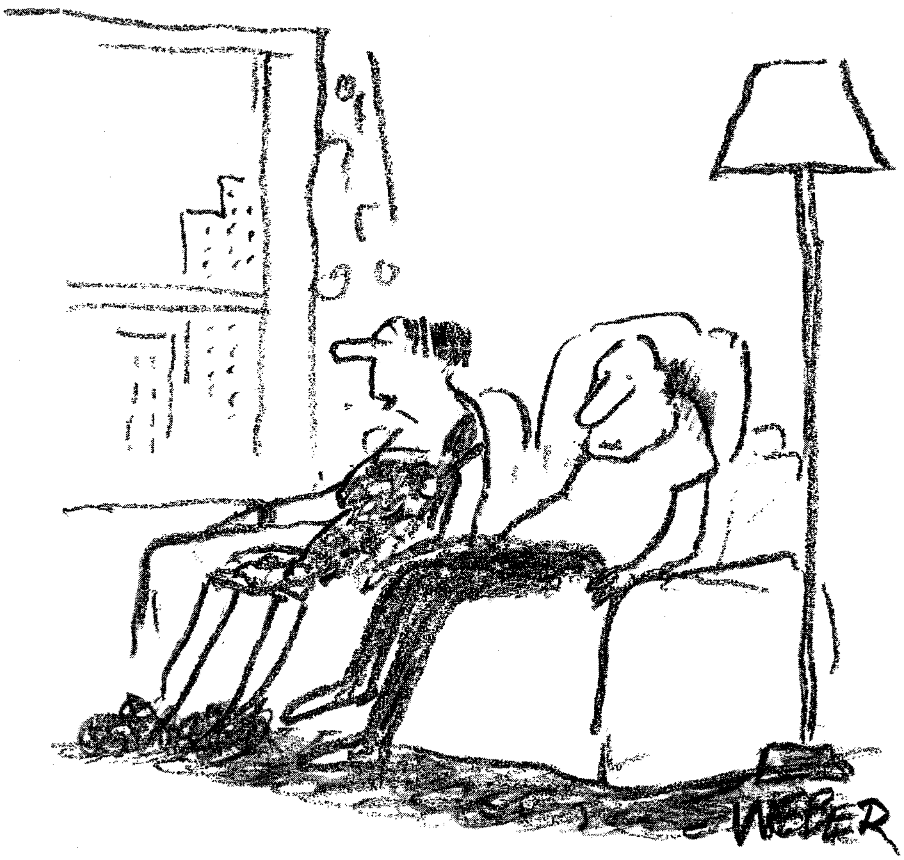


CORBIS SABA

beans, and breads. We were in a dining room with a hand-painted mural of Washington, D.C., as a backdrop. Bandar pointed to the small jet rounding the Monument, an image commissioned by his wife, Princess Haifa, in a nod to Bandar's years as a fighter pilot for the Royal Saudi Air Force.

That week had not been a good one, but neither had any week for more than a year—not since September 11, 2001, when nineteen hijackers, Islamic fundamentalists, attacked the United States, and fifteen of them were identified as Saudi nationals. There were a great many news stories reporting that hundreds of millions of dollars have gone from Saudi companies and charities to extremist groups, including Al Qaeda. Late last year, it turned out that Princess Haifa had made a charitable donation that ended up in the bank account of the wife of a man who helped two of the hijackers. F.B.I. and Justice Department officials later said that the financial trail was indirect: a check from the Princess, intended for a Jordanian woman married to a Saudi who needed an operation, had been endorsed to someone else. But the reaction in the press and from some politicians was harsh: What side were the Saudis on? "I felt like the whole world fell on my head," Haifa told me, in January, sitting in her living room. She is a tall woman with shoulder-length hair that is streaked with gray. "How can I want to help these people when they want our downfall?" she asked. Laura Bush called to sympathize; so did George H. W. Bush and his wife, Barbara. "I felt horribly about the attacks on her," the elder Bush wrote to me.

The Saudi connection to September 11th was not Bandar's first crisis, but it has certainly been his worst. In the Reagan era, he was exposed as an intermediary in the Iran-Contra affair; it was Bandar who arranged for thirty-two million dollars in Saudi financing for the Nicaraguan Contras. The Saudi Ambassador operated at times in the shadows of diplomacy. But now Bandar was working to save the reputation of his own country, a nation where Wahhabism, an extreme and rigidly austere version of Islam, was routinely taught and practiced. (The Wahhabis believe in a literal interpretation of the Koran and in their duty to convert or rid their nation of non-Wahhabi Muslims.) Americans seemed to be looking at his country with fresh eyes, and they saw a place with anti-democratic institutions, with a royal family that ruled with oil money, and with a population that was virulently anti-American. On the night he heard that fifteen of the hijackers were Saudis, Bandar said, "I was shocked. I was depressed. I was angry. Then it dawned on me that every fight I had in this town—political fight—I had it with Congress, with the Administration, but I always felt very comfortable as far as public opinion is concerned. This time, I thought, I have no problems with the Administration or Congress or even with the media, in a sense. But Joe Six-Pack is not going to understand now the fine differences."



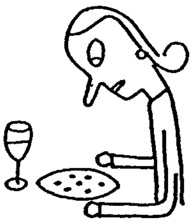
"Nothing beats New York for sheer energy."

Bandar, the senior diplomat in Washington, has served under four American Presidents, and has been the emissary to, among others, Margaret Thatcher, Tony Blair, Mikhail Gorbachev, Saddam Hussein, and the Chinese government. He is a man of exuberant charm; he is also flashy, cunning, secretive, and, at times, ruthless ("a.k.a. 'Mr. Smoothie' " is how the *Times* columnist William Safire has referred to him). Unlike most ambassadors, Bandar has unprecedented access to the President and to most senior American officials. On the night that we met in McLean, George Tenet, the director of the C.I.A., stopped by for a quick meeting, and when I visited Bandar last month he received a telephone call from Condoleezza Rice, Bush's national-security adviser. Rice was checking on Saudi efforts to persuade the French to support a second U.N. resolution calling on Iraq to disarm. Some think that Bandar exaggerates his influence and his presence, but his name shows up repeatedly in any recounting of the political events of the past twenty years—in particular as a fixer of problems that cannot be solved in the open. According to an authoritative Israeli source, Ehud Barak thought that in many cases Bandar's intercession was more effective than that of the American peacekeeping team. "At the end of the day, who can deliver is who wins the battle," Bandar told me.

Bandar lives in two worlds, and the ease with which he moves between them has made him a natural intermediary. He is a member of the Saudi royal family—the son of the Defense Minister, Prince Sultan bin Abdul Aziz, who is second in line to the Crown. He is widely regarded as pragmatic and non-ideological, and sensitive to the subtleties of complex and emotional issues. He is fond of American colloquialisms and American history, and he likes Big Macs served on silver platters. "I am more Alexander Hamilton ideals than Jeffersonian Democrat," he likes to say, referring to his conservative political leanings. He travels frequently on his private Airbus A-340; since December, he has travelled six times between Washington and Saudi Arabia, with stops in Pakistan, Jordan, Syria, Egypt, Paris, and London, carrying messages between Bush and Crown Prince Abdullah, the de-facto Saudi ruler, and other heads of state. When I saw him last week, he had just returned from Riyadh; the first people he saw were Bush and Vice-President Dick Cheney.

He has the ability to focus intimately on the person in front of him, laughing and trading gossip, and he speaks animatedly, his eyes and hands in constant motion. He has always known how to make friends with important people and with people who will someday be important. Nancy Reagan used him to relay messages to her husband's Cabinet; he played racquetball with Colin Powell in the seventies. (Powell lives nearby in McLean, and the two see each other frequently.) One of our interviews lasted for seven hours, until nearly midnight; afterward, Bandar went to the airport to leave for Saudi Arabia. I had not known that he was going until he stood up and put on a lambskin-lined full-length desert coat and joined the waiting motorcade. "A long time ago, when I was young and immature and aggressive, a Jewish car salesman in Alabama told me, 'Make your words soft and sweet—you never know when you have to eat them.' I never forgot it. That phrase has saved my rear end, my royal rear end, so many times."

A few months after September 11th, Bandar went to Aspen, where he has a thirty-two-room mansion. A major part of his success, one foreign leader told me, was that Bandar could be trusted to convey King Fahd's private views when they differed from his public statements. Bandar had gone to Aspen to relax, but also to do a little housecleaning in a place that has fewer diversions than Washington. He had brought with him sixteen of thirty or so locked attaché cases that he keeps in McLean. They contain evidence of the covert operations and secret agreements that Bandar coördinated at the behest of King Fahd and the United States, mostly during the Reagan era—such as records of a Swiss bank account that Bandar had personally set up for the Nicaraguan Contras. In the nineties, Bandar helped persuade the Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi to turn over two suspects in the 1988 bombing of Pan Am Flight 103. (Privately, Bandar has called Qaddafi "a Jerry Lewis trying to be a Churchill.") In the late nineties, in appreciation for Saudi help in resolving the Pan Am Flight 103 case, the Libyans made an extraordinary offer: to share information with the United States about Osama bin Laden, whom the Saudis had stripped of citizenship five years earlier. (By one account, the Libyans actually offered to assassinate bin Laden, which made Tenet particularly uneasy. A spokesman for former President Clinton says that the Administration was unaware of that offer, but he acknowledged that the Libyans had provided intelligence help.) Libya was the first country to seek an international arrest warrant for bin Laden, because of terrorist activity there.



Most of the details of these operations were known to only three people: Bandar, Fahd (who was incapacitated by a series of strokes in 1995), and William Casey, the former C.I.A. director, who died in 1987. I later asked Prince Turki bin Faisal, the former chief of the Saudi intelligence services and Bandar's brother-in-law, whether he had known about Bandar's less savory covert activities. "Bandar operated outside the norm," he told me. "He conducted secret operations out of normal channels, with King Fahd's permission and blessing, that I was not aware of." Turki, who is the youngest son of King Faisal, has a low-key manner and is considered one of the most Westernized of the Saudi leaders. He said that he understood the special relationship between Bandar and Fahd. Turki told me that, as King, his father once said, "When you are working with your uncles, remember that they are your uncles, and they may want to do something that they don't want you to know about."

In the early eighties, Bandar began having regular lunches with Vice-President George Bush, in his office at the Old Executive Office Building. Although Bush was widely considered a weak Vice-President, Bandar believed that he was the first important American politician he'd known who did not automatically favor Israel; from the start, Bandar had found Bush helpful in advancing the Saudi cause, and supportive of Saudi efforts to buy weapons from the United States. Bandar also liked him personally.

In 1985, Bandar threw a lavish party for Bush, who never forgot the courtesy, and always had time for the Saudi Ambassador. "Most important, he was a troubleshooter for King Fahd," Brent Scowcroft, Bush's national-security adviser, wrote of Bandar in a joint memoir with Bush. "The King frequently turned to him for advice. For these reasons, we knew he was a special conduit from us to Fahd."

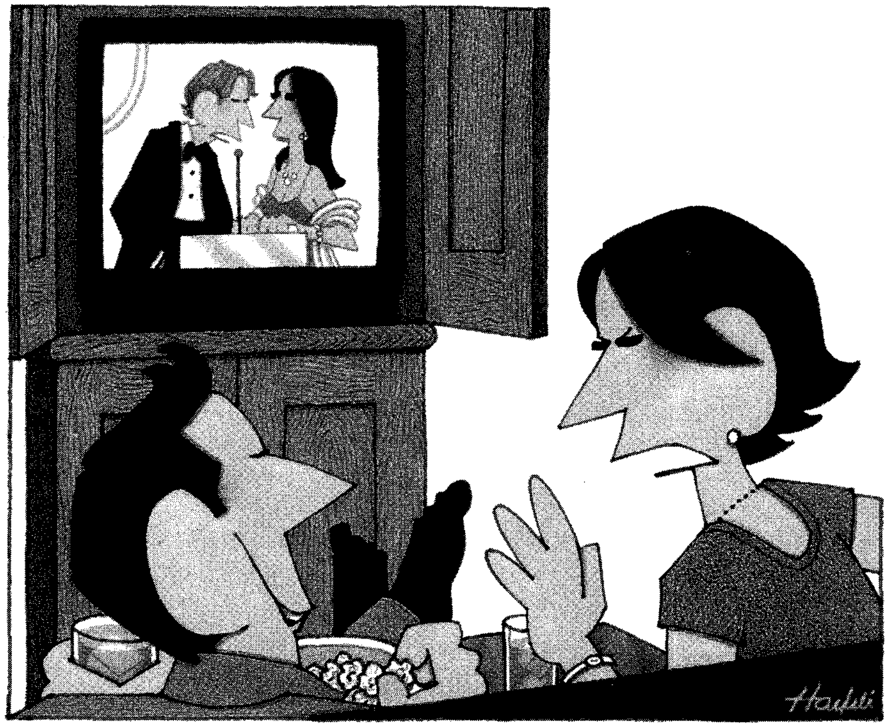
The major event of the first Bush Administration was Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait, on the northern border of Saudi Arabia, and the subsequent Persian Gulf War. Just four months earlier, Bandar had met with Saddam Hussein, at Fahd's request, to discuss a speech in which Saddam, boasting of his country's chemical weapons, had said, "By God, we will make the fire eat up half of Israel if it tries to do anything against Iraq." The speech was condemned by the Bush Administration, and Saddam wanted Bandar to tell the Administration that his words were being misinterpreted—he had no intention of attacking Israel unless he was attacked first. In return, he wanted the Americans to persuade Israel not to attack Iraq. These messages were conveyed, but when Iraq invaded Kuwait, Bandar realized that Saddam had duped everyone—he had got free passage into Kuwait. It looked as if Saddam's real target was Saudi Arabia and its oil fields.

But a smaller moment may have cemented the bond between the elder Bush and Bandar. When George and Barbara Bush visited the troops in Saudi Arabia during the Thanksgiving holiday in 1990, remain as Ambassador. "To this day," the former President wrote to me, "Bandar is the only person besides the President of the United States that Bar lets smoke in our house, although both have to do it in their room with the door closed."

Bandar's father is Prince Sultan, one of the seven sons of Abdul Aziz, the founder of modern Saudi Arabia, and his favorite wife, Hassa bint Ahmed al-Sudairi, who is perhaps the most revered woman in Saudi history. Sultan, who was in his early twenties at the time of Bandar's birth, had already held the position of governor of Riyadh. But Bandar's mother, Khizaran, was a dark-skinned sixteen-year-old commoner from the Asir Province, one of the southernmost points in Saudi Arabia. She could not read or write; she later taught herself. Bandar, who sees her regularly, says that she was a concubine. He lived with his mother and his aunt, and had little contact with his father when he was very young. "It taught me patience, and a defense mechanism, if you want, to not expect anything," he told me. "And the way I rationalized it to myself was if I don't expect anything and I don't get anything, I don't get disappointed. So nobody can hurt my feelings."

Under Sharia, the Islamic law that governs Saudi Arabia, all sons are born equal, even if they are illegitimate. But Bandar was eight years old before he entered his father's bedroom for the first time. "One day at school I heard from one of my brothers that Daddy was sick, and I didn't understand how sick or how serious it was," he told me. "But I was a little too proud to ask people or to show people I didn't know." Sultan heard of Bandar's concern and summoned him. When Bandar arrived, he pulled the young boy onto his bed. "It was like he gave me the whole world," Bandar told me.

Bandar's isolation from the family ended when he was eleven. Abdul Aziz had died several years earlier, and it was decided that Bandar and his mother should live with his grandmother Hassa, in the palace. "It was a practical decision, but it completely altered my life," Bandar told me. Each day at 5 A.M., Hassa would wake up her grandson for prayers. After prayers, she told him the history of the House of Saud. "She was not educated, but she had learned the Koran by heart,"



"I'm not going to sit here and make fun of the very people I'm wasting my time watching."

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Bush called Bandar, who was in Saudi Arabia at the time. Bandar went to the private quarters in the royal palace where the Bushes were staying. Bush had tears in his eyes, and Bandar, worried, asked what had happened. Bush explained that Dorothy, their recently divorced daughter, was alone at the White House with her children. They had called her from the airplane and learned that Bandar's wife, Haifa, had invited Doro and her children to spend Thanksgiving with her. ("I don't have parents now," Haifa told me. "The Bushes are like my mother and father. I know if ever I needed anything I could go to them.")

On the day before the 1992 election, Bandar was in Houston; at around two in the morning, unable to sleep, he wrote an emotional letter to Bush in which he expressed gratitude to Bush for saving his country. "You are my friend for life, one of my family," he wrote. "Tomorrow you win either way. If you win, you deserve it, and if you lose you are in good company," and he reminded Bush that Churchill had won the war but lost the election. Bandar had the letter delivered at four in the morning. At around six that evening, Bush called; the exit polls were showing a Clinton victory. "It's over," Bush said. (Bush recently confirmed that he had received this letter from Bandar.) "It was like I lost one of my family, dead," Bandar said. He told the King that he wanted to resign.

Back in Washington, on a Saturday a few weeks later, Bandar got a call from Bush, inviting him and the family to Camp David for lunch. "Can we have a sort of Wasp lunch, meaning at eleven-thirty, twelve, not an Arab lunch, at three or four?" Bandar asked, explaining that the Dallas Cowboys, the team he roots for, were playing the Redskins the next day and he wanted to be home to watch the game. The owner of the Cowboys was expected for dinner.

It was the first time Bandar had seen Bush since the defeat, and the gathering had an awkward feeling. After lunch, Bush and Bandar went for a walk. As they started up a steep incline on the trail, Bush explained that every world leader who visited had been put to the test: Gorbachev, John Major, Helmut Kohl. (Kohl had stopped halfway up the hill, Bush said.) Bandar was not sure what to say. Sorry you lost? They kept walking. Eventually, Bandar recalled, Bush told him to ask King Fahd to help the new President; Bandar decided to

Bandar recalled. "She was a combination of Maggie Thatcher and Mother Teresa. She was very pious, yet very strong-willed." He worshipped her, and she returned the affection. "She was the most influential figure in my life," he said.

"Living with her opened up his eyes," a close friend of Bandar's told me. "Hassa taught him about life, about women, about politics, about what a great man his grandfather was. She made him feel special, and it was at that point that his relationship with his father began."

Even then, Bandar told me, his contact with his father was limited. "My memory of him as a child was that he was always working at his papers or talking on the telephone," Prince Khaled bin Sultan, Bandar's half brother, wrote in a memoir. An outsider like Bandar would have to try hard, to amuse, to be useful. When Bandar was thirteen, Sultan was named Defense Minister, and three years later Bandar, in a move surely intended to please his father, enrolled in the Royal Air Force College, at Cranwell, England, to train as a fighter pilot. (Bandar, then sixteen, had a doctor alter his birth certificate by a year in order to qualify.) But he also joined, he told me, because he'd always felt somewhat uncertain of the attention people showed him: "I didn't feel I did anything to earn it except by happenstance, circumstance. Just because my father is a prince, I became a prince. I never worked a day in my life to be one. Compare that with my feeling when I got commissioned a second lieutenant. I was so proud."

Even then, expectations for Bandar were not high. "He wasn't sent to Eton," a close Saudi friend said. "He was not given great opportunity. He was sent to military school. You do not send someone to military school to get a great opportunity." (Bandar has sent some of his sons to Eton.)

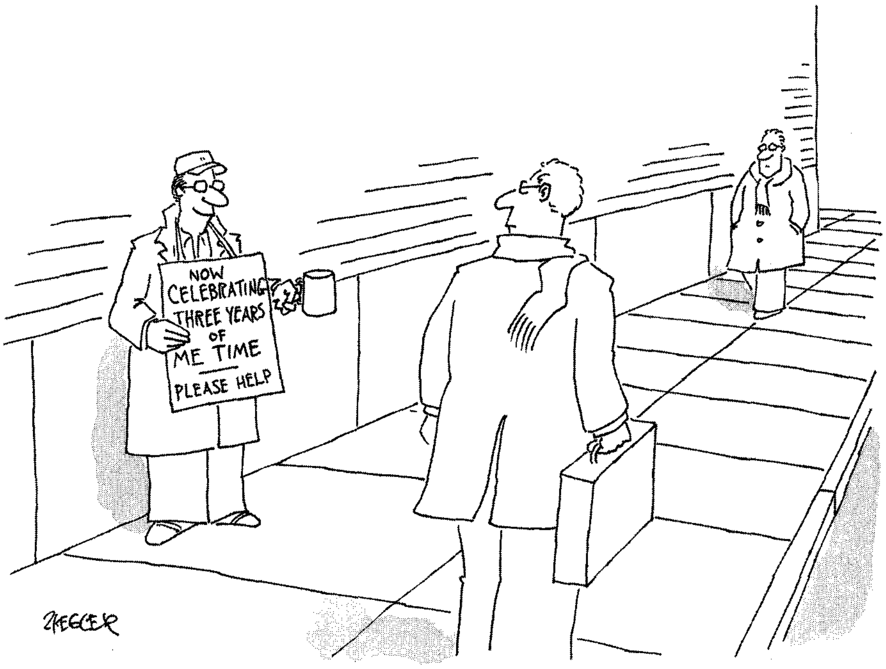
Bandar excelled at flying. "Really the only thing I wanted to do in my life was fly an airplane and be ready when called upon to be a warrior," he told me. At Cranwell, he began to develop the swashbuckling personality that some Westerners have found so appealing. Walking into a local pub one day, a lonely Bandar found a group of classmates drinking yard-long flasks of beer. He asked to join them, and although alcohol was banned in Saudi Arabia, Bandar stayed through the night.

When Bandar returned to Saudi Arabia three years later, he was determined to show that he was more than Sultan's son. "When I am fifty feet upside down and I don't crash, it has nothing to do with my dad or my granddad or anybody. It is me and I am good," he said. He became the Saudi Air Force's chief acrobatics artist. Turki told me about a day when Sultan was sitting with King Faisal, Turki's father, and King Hussein of Jordan reviewing a Saudi military parade. Bandar was flying acrobatic maneuvers, and at one point his plane appeared to shoot straight up, showering a spray of exhaust over everyone. Faisal, who did not know the identity of the pilot, was not pleased. "Bandar wanted to do it because the two kings were there, and probably he wanted to show King Hussein, who was himself a pilot, what Saudi pilots can do," Turki told me.

Flying also gave Bandar an opportunity to differentiate himself from the other young princes, who tended to favor the good life. The distinction paid off with Haifa, the youngest daughter of King Faisal, who was educated in Saudi Arabia and Switzerland. The first time Haifa saw Bandar, she said, "I had a feeling I would marry this man." She was sixteen. Although they were cousins, they hadn't grown up together, and four years passed before they met again. "It was not a prearranged marriage," she said with emphasis. Queen Iffat, Haifa's mother, had been a friend of Bandar's grandmother, and she, too, liked Bandar. He and Haifa were married in 1972, and they have eight children.

In 1978, Turki ran into Bandar at the Madison Hotel in downtown Washington. Bandar, then a major in the Saudi Air Force, was in Washington on Saudi military business. Bandar's career as a pilot had come to an end the year before, when he crash-landed his jet and suffered severe back injuries, and he had decided to work his way up through the military. Turki was then lobbying Congress to approve the $2.5-billion sale of sixty F-15 fighter jets to the Saudis. Acquiring the jets was extremely important to the King, who worried about the oil fields, but the talks were going poorly; although the sale was strongly supported by President Carter, its opponents included the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, the most influential Jewish lobby. Turki was getting a cool reception on the Hill, and was having trouble answering technical questions from members of Congress. He asked Bandar to help.

One of Bandar's first stops was the Oval Office, where Carter asked him to fly to California and win the support of Ronald Reagan, the former governor, which he did. Then, with the F-15 vote still pending, Carter asked Bandar to help persuade Senator James Abourezk, a Democrat from South Dakota and the first Arab-American elected to the Senate, to support the Panama Canal treaty, which


NOW CELEBRATING THREE YEARS OF ME TIME
PLEASE HELP
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needed his vote for passage. Soon afterward, Fahd asked Bandar to be an emissary to Carter for him, sometimes acting without the Saudi Ambassador's knowledge. "He was only a major, but something about his presence sucked up all the authority in the room," Colin Powell wrote of the first time he met Bandar, in 1978, in a briefing room in Saudi Arabia. A year later, Bandar enrolled in a master's program at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, in Washington. Powell, then military assistant to the Deputy Secretary of Defense, was naturally drawn to Bandar, and the two began playing racquetball at the Pentagon Officers Athletic Club. In Powell's memoir, "My American Journey," he wrote:

> I remember Prince Bandar coming out of the POAC after our first game. He had a gym bag slung over his shoulder. He flicked it off with a shrug, and an aide materialized out of the woodwork and caught it. The prince extended his hand into empty space, and pulled it back with a Coke can in it. It is good to be a prince, I thought. In the years to follow, we would often work together, and the vast social gulf between us began to shrink until the familiarity between the kid from the South Bronx and the prince from a royal palace approached the outrageous and the profane.

In 1982, after Reagan became President, Fahd made Bandar the military attaché at the Saudi Embassy, a move that Bandar thought would end his career. But the following year, not long after Fahd became king, Bandar became the Saudi Ambassador to the United States. "When I first got to America, I didn't understand politics," Bandar said. "I was confused by it. Then it became like a game, like a drug. I enjoyed the game. It was exotic and exciting. There was no blood drawn. It was physically safe, but emotionally tough."

Bandar's relationship with Bill Clinton began when Clinton was the governor of Arkansas and asked the Saudis to help pay for a center for Middle East studies at the University of Arkansas. Bandar saw Clinton as an international romantic. "He gets excited by the possibility of talking to his enemy and converting him," he told me while Clinton was still President. "If Clinton leaves office . . . and doesn't have a relationship with Cuba, North Korea, Iran, or Libya, he will feel internally that he has not accomplished his mission." Bandar says that he liked Clinton; he had a first-class brain and could sell anything to anybody. But Bandar had problems with what he called a "weak-dicked" foreign-policy team, finding its members too political, or culturally arrogant, while they, in turn, found him manipulative and untrustworthy. "It's classic Bandar to set one person against another," a top Clinton Administration official told me; he asked for anonymity, because, he said, "Bandar has me in his sights." Bandar's relationship with Samuel (Sandy) Berger, Clinton's national-security adviser, was particularly tense, and became more so when Clinton, near the end of his term, tried to broker a broad peace plan between Israel and several Arab countries.

On a weekend in March of 2000, Clinton summoned the Saudi Ambassador to the White House, a meeting also attended by Berger and Bandar's chargé d'affaires, Rihab Massoud. Clinton told Bandar that he needed his help in arranging a summit with the Syrian President, Hafez al-Assad—which Clinton saw as a prelude to a larger plan for peace between Israel and the Arab states. Assad was known to trust Bandar, and Bandar's participation was secretly endorsed by Ehud Barak. "I know what President Assad wants," Clinton said; according to Bandar's version, Assad wanted Israel to withdraw from the Golan Heights, and to the borders that were taken in the 1967 war. As Bandar recalled, Clinton planned to pressure Barak to satisfy Assad's demands; if he succeeded, he would call for a summit. Bandar asked Clinton to repeat all this, and told Massoud to write it down and repeat it to Clinton. Clinton also wanted Bandar to ask Assad to quiet the fighting in South Lebanon.

That night, Bandar flew to Saudi Arabia to consult with Crown Prince Abdullah; from there he went to Syria, where he met with Assad and his Foreign Minister, Farouk al-Shaara. Assad, according to Bandar's account, asked him to repeat Clinton's message three times. "Clinton knows what I want," Assad said. "God knows he knows what I want. We have spoken fifteen times." Bandar was unaware that the two men had had so much contact. When Bandar mentioned the fighting in South Lebanon, Shaara interrupted to say that they had no influence. Assad reportedly smiled and said that he thought they could take care of the problem.

"Bingo," Bandar told Berger. Clinton was leaving the next day for India and Pakistan, and Berger told Bandar that if Clinton got what he needed from Barak they would set up a summit with Assad.

Word leaked out that Assad was going to Geneva to meet with Clinton. Since Assad was reluctant to travel—Barak privately called him the President of Albania, because he hated to leave home—this led to speculation that something major was about to happen. But no announcement followed the meeting, which lasted for three hours; there were rumors that Assad had not accepted Clinton's offer—had in fact impatiently dismissed Clinton's proposals. Later, the Syrians told the Saudis that the Americans had not offered them the deal that Assad had been promised. The collapse of the talks was viewed as a serious failure. The Crown Prince, worried that Assad would now think that the Saudis had tried to trick the Syrians, told Bandar to return to Syria and explain exactly what Clinton had told him. "To hell with this Administration," Bandar said to himself.

Several days later, Bandar had dinner with Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, who had been in Geneva for the summit. Bandar liked Albright, and admired her toughness. At dinner, by Bandar's account, Albright immediately complained about Assad. Before the summit, she said, Assad kept saying that he wanted to know Barak's bottom line, and so Clinton sent Dennis Ross, the special Middle East envoy, to find out.

After a few more minutes of conversation, it became clear to Bandar that Albright had no idea that Clinton had asked him to take a message to Assad. "Son of a bitch," Albright said, apparently angry that Berger had left her out of the preliminary talks. "That Sandy."

Albright told Bandar that in a meeting with Clinton—apparently three days before Bandar's meeting—they had agreed to send Ross to Israel. "Now I understand why Assad looked so stupid to me," Bandar remembers Albright saying—referring to Assad's apparent refusal to listen to Clinton. Bandar asked Albright to tell the President that, from then on, he would

"Not tonight, hon, I have a concussion."

discuss Middle East issues only if both Albright and Berger were in the room.

Albright told me that she "certainly had the dinner" with Bandar, but did not think she would have used expletives to describe Berger. "I'm sure I was annoyed with Sandy," she said, "because I had not been told that Bandar was carrying this message" to Assad.

I later asked Dennis Ross about the Saudi version, and he acknowledged that he had learned about Bandar's meeting with Clinton after the fact, though he did know Bandar was going to talk to Assad. "Had I been in on the meeting with the President, given my ear, I would have known how Bandar would hear what the President was saying to him," Ross said. He added, "He was bound to interpret it the way he did." Nonetheless, Ross went on, "Bandar is right that there was a misunderstanding, at least in terms of what he said to Assad. . . . If Assad had listened and had suddenly been disappointed, I could have understood it. But he didn't listen. He was saying no from the beginning of the meeting." Still, he said, Bandar was always honest with him and had played a significant role in the peace negotiations. "He always did what he said he was going to do," Ross said. A spokesman for the Clinton Administration said that neither Clinton nor Berger could specifically recall the Oval Office meeting. "It is true that we asked for Bandar's help on this with Assad, but it is not true that Clinton said he could deliver the 1967 borders," the spokesman said.

An aide to Bandar, however, said, "How could we misinterpret it?" Nothing short of Clinton's assurances would have lured Assad to a summit, the aide said. "With Assad it was not this or that. It was not get half or three-quarters or seven-eighths," he continued. "Nothing could be clearer."

Clinton, who continued to apply his considerable energy to finding a Middle East solution, came to believe, in December of 2000, that he had finally found a formula for peace; he asked once more for Bandar's help. Bandar's first reaction was not to get involved; the Syrian summit had failed, and talks between Barak and Arafat at Camp David, in July, had collapsed. But when Dennis Ross showed Bandar the President's talking papers Bandar recognized that in its newest iteration the peace plan was a remarkable development. It gave Arafat almost everything he wanted, including the return of about ninety-seven per cent of the land of the occupied territories; all of Jerusalem except the Jewish and Armenian quarters, with Jews preserving the right to worship at the Temple Mount; and a thirty-billion-dollar compensation fund.

Arafat told Crown Prince Abdullah that he wanted Bandar's help with the negotiations. "There's not much I can do unless Arafat is willing to understand that this is it," Bandar told the Crown Prince.

On January 2, 2001, Bandar picked up Arafat at Andrews Air Force Base and reviewed the plan with him. Did he think he could get a better deal? Bandar asked. Did he prefer Sharon to Barak? he continued, referring to the upcoming election in Israel. Of course not, Arafat replied. Barak's negotiators were doves, Bandar went on, and said, "Since 1948, every time we've had something on the table we say no. Then we say yes. When we say yes, it's not on the table anymore. Then we have to deal with something less. Isn't it about time we say yes?" Bandar added, "We've always said to the Americans, 'Our red line is Jerusalem. You get us a deal that's O.K. on Jerusalem and we're going, too.' "

Arafat said that he understood, but still Bandar issued something of an ultimatum: "Let me tell you one more time. You have only two choices. Either you take this deal or we go to war. If you take this deal, we will all throw our weight behind you. If you don't take this deal, do you think anybody will go to war for you?" Arafat was silent. Bandar continued, "Let's start with the big country, Egypt. You think Egypt will go to war with you?" Arafat had had his problems with Egypt, too. No, he said. "I'll prove it to you, just to confirm," Bandar went on. Bandar called the Egyptian Ambassador. Bandar reported that the Egyptian Ambassador, who was to join them shortly, was willing to support the peace process. "Is Jordan going to go to war? Syria go to war? So, Mr. Arafat, what are you losing?"

When Nabil Fahmy, the Egyptian Ambassador, joined them, at the Ritz-Carlton, Bandar repeated much of his advice. Arafat said that he would accept Clinton's proposal, with one condition: he wanted Saudi Arabia and Egypt to give him political cover and support. Bandar and Fahmy assured him that they would, and Arafat left for the White House.

Arafat was supposed to return to Bandar's house after his meeting with Clinton and, with the Egyptian Ambassador present, call the Crown Prince and President Mubarak. After three hours, when Arafat still hadn't shown up, the Egyptian Ambassador told Bandar that something

GNOSTICISM

I

Heaven's lips! I dreamed
of a page in a book containing the word "bird" and I
entered "bird."
Bird grinds on,

grinds on, thrusting against black. Thrusting
wings, thrusting again, hard
banks slap against it either side, that bird was exhausted.

Still, beating, working its way and below in dark woods
small creatures
leap. Rip

at food with scrawny lips.
Lips at night.
Nothing guiding it, bird beats on, night wetness on it.
A lion looks up.
Smell of adolescence in these creatures, this ordinary
night for them. Astonishment

inside me like a separate person,
sweat-soaked. How to grip.
For some people a bird sings, feathers shine. I just get this *this*.

II

Forgot? how the mind goes at it, you open
the window (late), there is a siffling sound,
that cold smell before sleep, roofs,
frozen staircase, frozen stair,
a piece of it comes in.

Comes in, stands in the room a bit of a column of it alive.
At first no difference, then palely, a dust,
an indentation, stain
of some guest
centuries ago.

Some guest *at this very hour*, was it final love or the usual
I said! You said! Oh, the body,
no listen, unpinning itself, slam of car door,
snow. Far, far, far, far.

Washed in the blood of that.

III

First line has to make your brain race that's how Homer does it,
that's how Frank O'Hara does it, why
at such a pace
Muses
slam through the house—there goes one (fainting) up the rungs
of your strange BULLFIGHT, buttered
almost in a nearness
to skyblue
Thy pang—Pollock yourself!
Just to hang onto life is why

IV

They found the dog! Mother died! He didn't mean to hang up just
a bad connection! No time for lipstick if I answer that but isn't
there a Ladies outside Philosophy anyway they never start
till ten after oh rats now I've lost the Gertrude Stein
quote was it beefsteak?—what

swarm of clearnesses and do they amaze you,
in between when you hear the phone and when you get it,
all palpable explanations of why it rang and what to do
and what'd it be like if your brain were this fit
all the time? Say,

at the moment in the interminable dinner when Coetzee basking
icily across from you at the faculty table is all at once
there like a fox in a glare, asking
And what are your interests?
his face a glass that has shattered but not yet fallen.

V

". . . what the little word 'after' means . . ."
(I. Kant, Inaugural Dissertation 2.399.4-6)

Stuffed September night, the hot leaves bump
on swollen breezes and a fat
black moonlessness.
I got up (3 A.M.)

to clean the house, there was
so much pressure on it forcing the butt end down.
I scrubbed counters and mopped floors.
I didn't turn the lights on.
Cleaning

in the dark makes a surprise for later. By then
I will have
slept, woke, come striding back
from infuriated interiors—ah
now

recall
I dreamed
of Wordsworth—his little vials,
Wordsworth collected little vials,
had hundreds of them, his sister stored them on
 shelves in the pantry—
and yes

to inspire me is why
I put in a bit of Wordsworth but then the page is
 over, he weighs it to the ground,
the autumn of him soaking my mop purple in the
 dyes of what's falling
breathless under its own
senses.

VI

Walking the wild mountain in a storm I saw the
 great trees throw their arms.
Ruin! they cried and seemed aware

the sublime is called a "science of anxiety."
What do men and women know of it?—at first

not even realizing they were naked!
The language knew.

Watch "naked" (*arumim*) flesh slide into "cunning"
 (*arum*) snake in the next verse.
And suddenly a vacancy, a silence,

is somewhere inside the machine.
Veins pounding.

—*Anne Carson*

must have gone wrong. Bandar, too, was worried and called Arafat's security detail. Arafat had left the White House twenty minutes earlier, he was told, and was back at the Ritz. When Bandar called, Arafat said that he needed to talk to him at once. George Tenet, the C.I.A. director, was on his way to the hotel to discuss the plan, and Arafat was then supposed to return to the White House. Bandar, accompanied by the Egyptian Ambassador, hurried to the Ritz.

Arafat said that the meeting with Clinton had been "excellent," but Bandar did not believe him; he thought that Arafat's staff looked as if they had just come from a funeral. The Egyptian Ambassador later privately remarked that Arafat looked dead. Bandar asked Arafat if he wanted to talk to the Crown Prince or President Mubarak. No, Arafat replied. He said that he'd had a great time with the President, but the meeting had turned sour when Dennis Ross joined them. Yet, he went on, he and Clinton were in agreement. Bandar, concealing his disbelief, said that was good news. Soon after this exchange, Bandar got a note from a security officer, which said, "Urgent. Call the President." In the corridor, Bandar called the White House and reached Berger.

"Congratulations," Bandar said, loudly and sarcastically, for he knew by then that the talks had failed. On what? Berger asked. "Arafat is telling me you guys have a deal." Not true, Berger said, adding that he and Clinton had made it clear to Arafat that this was his last chance. Please, Berger said, tell Arafat that this is it. "It's too late," Bandar recalls saying. "That should have happened with the White House, not with me." (A spokesman for Clinton recalled, "At one point, [Clinton] said, 'It's five minutes to twelve, Mr. Chairman, and you are going to lose the best and maybe the only opportunity that your people will have to solve this problem on satisfactory grounds by not being able to make a decision.' . . . The Israelis accepted. They said they had reservations and Arafat never accepted.")

Bandar believed that the White House had hurt its cause by not pressing an ultimatum. Arafat, though, was committing a crime against the Palestinians—in fact, against the entire region. If it weren't so serious, Bandar thought, it would be a comedy. He returned to Arafat's room and sat down, trying to remember: "Make your words soft and sweet." Bandar began, "Mr. President, I want to be sure now. You're telling me you struck a deal?" When Arafat said it was so, Bandar, still hiding his fury, offered his congratulations. His wife and children were waiting for him in Aspen, he said, and he wanted to go. Bandar could see the life draining out of Arafat. He started to leave, then turned around. "I hope you remember, sir, what I told you. If we lose this opportunity, it is not going to be a tragedy. This is going to be a crime." When Bandar looked at Arafat's staff, their faces showed incredulity.

The next evening, a White House spokesman said that Arafat had agreed to accept Clinton's proposals, with reservations, only as the basis for new talks. Arafat said later that he had not been offered as much as had been described. When Bandar told all this to the Crown Prince, Abdullah was surprised, particularly about the offer on Jerusalem. A few months later, Abdullah asked Clinton, who was visiting Saudi Arabia, whether Bandar's description of the offer was correct. Clinton confirmed Bandar's details, and said that the failure of these last negotiations had broken his heart. Later still, the Crown Prince told Bandar he was shocked that Arafat had wasted such an opportunity, and that he had lied to him about the American offer. Bandar told associates that it was an open secret within the Arab world that Arafat was not truthful. But Arafat had them trapped: they couldn't separate the cause from the man, because if you attacked the man you attacked the cause. "Clinton, the bastard, really tried his best," Bandar told me last week when we met at his house in McLean. "And Barak's position was so avant-garde that it was equal to Prime Minister Rabin"—Yitzhak Rabin, who was assassinated in November, 1995. "It broke my heart that Arafat did not take that offer."

Before the outcome of the 2000 election was settled, Bandar had asked George H. W. Bush to go pheasant shooting with him at an estate that he owns in England. It was to be a kind of Desert Storm reunion. Dick Cheney had accepted; so had former Secretary of State James Baker, the former national-security adviser Brent Scowcroft, and General H. Norman Schwarzkopf, the commander of the U.S. Central Command during the Gulf War. But when the shooting party arrived, on November 14th, Cheney had dropped out, as had Baker, who was in Florida managing the recount battle. A month later, when Al Gore conceded, Bandar felt that it was a victory not only for the Bush family but for Saudi Arabia. "Happy days are here again," one of his aides said, almost singing the words, when I saw him at the Saudi Embassy shortly after Bush's Inauguration.

In Saudi Arabia, great things were expected of George W. Bush. He was the son of the American with the most iconic status in Saudi Arabia, and the team that he had assembled vis-à-vis the Middle East was considered first-rate: Powell, Cheney, and Tenet, a Clinton Administration holdover who had Bandar's endorsement. There were people with access to Bush who had deep experience in the region: his father, Scowcroft, James Baker.

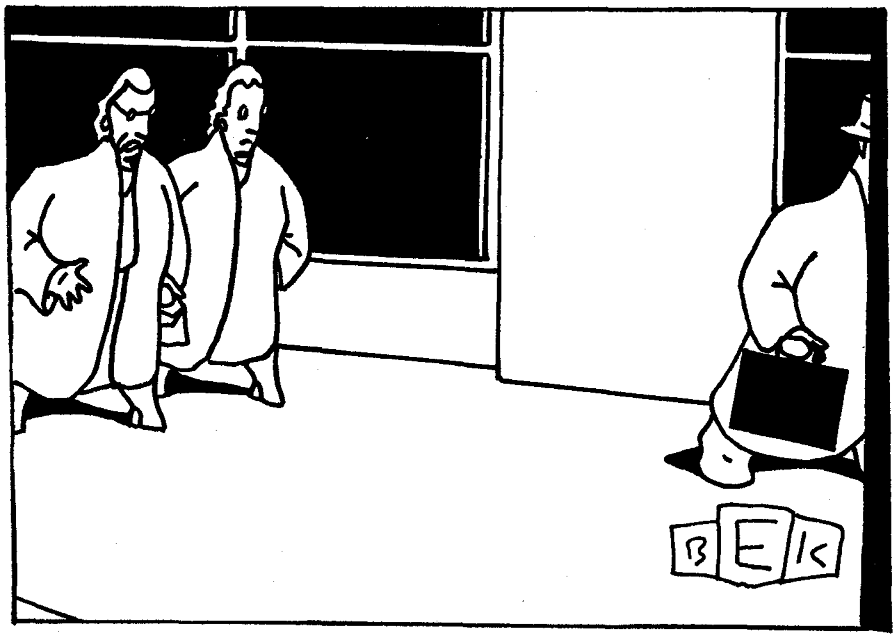
But as violence in the Middle East intensified and Barak blamed Arafat for the failure of the peace talks, Bandar began to worry. The Arab world was watching Al Jazeera, the satellite television network, which was constantly showing images of Israeli soldiers and suffering Palestinians. Bandar understood as well as anyone why Bush did not want to get involved. It was a mess, and Bush made it clear that he had no prestige to waste. Bandar was particularly angry with Arafat because if he publicly defended Barak's account it would make him sound like an apologist for Barak and Israel. "I was there. I was a witness. I cannot lie," he said privately.

Ariel Sharon was elected in February of 2001, and, according to a Saudi source, Arafat later said that Sharon had sent his son to say that Barak's deal was off the table; Sharon, however, could envision a process whereby the Palestinians might end up with forty-five per cent of the occupied territories, but not Jerusalem. Isn't that a great starting point? Arafat reportedly said. Bandar, when he heard that, was incredulous.

Yet he continued to press Bush and Powell to do something, even if they didn't trust Arafat. The issue was bigger than one man; it was roiling the Arab world. Bandar told Bush and Powell that in America he saw perhaps two minutes a day of network news about the region, "but when I go there I see five, six hours a day of it."

It did not help Bush in the Arab world that he seemed to place all the blame on Arafat. In May, Crown Prince Abdullah publicly declined an invitation to the White House. "We want them to look at the reality and to consider their conscience," he said to a reporter for the *Financial Times*. "Don't they see what is happening to Palestinian children, women, the elderly—the humiliation, the hunger?"

Bandar attributed some of the problems to a lack of knowledge by Condoleezza Rice, who was, after all, a Russian expert. Powell, he believed, was on



"At this point, I'm just complaining on fumes."

his side, as was Tenet. He also believed that Vice-President Cheney, who, as the Secretary of Defense, had dealt extensively with the Saudis during the Persian Gulf War, would be a big help. But, as the months passed, Bandar and his aides kept hearing that Cheney and some senior Pentagon officials were saying that the Saudis were not seriously upset at the Administration's lack of involvement.

In August, the Crown Prince saw on television an Israeli soldier pushing an elderly Palestinian woman. When she fell, she grabbed the soldier's leg and he stepped on her. The Crown Prince, in a rage, called Bandar. "This is it. Those bastards!" he yelled, according to an account that Bandar has given associates. "Even women—they're stepping all over them." He ordered Bandar, who was in Aspen, to return to Washington and to deliver a message: Starting today, you go your way and we will go our way. From then on, the Saudis would look out for their own national interests. The high-ranking Saudi military delegation that had just arrived in Washington for meetings at the Pentagon was ordered to return home immediately.

The message represented a fundamental shift in Saudi policy, and Bandar left for Washington deeply worried. On August 27th, he met with Rice at her White House office. "This is the hardest message I've had to deliver between our two countries since I started working in this country, in 1983," Bandar began, according to official Saudi notes that were later confirmed by an Administration source. For the next several minutes, Bandar summarized relations between the United States and Saudi Arabia. "We were your friend when it was not fashionable to be your friend. We stood in the fifties and sixties with you in the region when nobody was." He continued, "The biggest challenge, of course, to the two of us was Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait." The Crown Prince, he said, was deeply disturbed by the "continued Israeli actions, horrible actions, as if Jewish blood is not equal to Palestinian"—in particular, the practice of punishing the families of people suspected of committing terrorist acts. "We wonder how the American people would have accepted the President of the United States ordering all the McVeigh family houses to be destroyed or burning their farms," he said, referring to the Oklahoma City bomber Timothy McVeigh. It seemed as if the United States had made a strategic decision to adopt Sharon's policy as American policy. "In light of all that, the Crown Prince feels that he cannot continue dealing with the United States," Bandar told Rice. "We feel that since you have taken such a decision, then we also are obliged to take our own decision."

Rice told Bandar that she was shocked by the message and would take it immediately to the President. But she wanted Bandar to understand that the United States had not adopted a new strategic policy for the region.

Within thirty-six hours, Bandar was on his way to Riyadh with a conciliatory response from Bush. Nothing should ever break the relations between their two countries, Bush wrote to the Crown Prince in a two-page letter dated August 29th. "I am troubled and feel deeply the suffering of ordinary Palestinians in their day to day life and I want such tragedies and sufferings to end," Bush wrote. "I firmly believe that the Palestinian people have a right to self-determination and to live peacefully and securely in their own state in their own homeland." Not even Clinton had publicly supported a Palestinian state.

On September 7th, Bandar returned to Washington with a letter from Abdullah to Bush, and a meeting was hurriedly arranged in the family quarters at the White House. Bush was there, as were Cheney, Rice, and Powell. As Bandar was walking in, Powell cornered him. "What the fuck are you doing?" witnesses recall Powell asking. "You're putting the fear of God in everybody's hearts here. We've all come rushing here to hear this revelation that you bring from Saudi Arabia. You scared the shit out of everybody." Bandar replied, "I don't give a damn what you feel. We are scared ourselves."

In his letter, the Crown Prince said that he had taken immediate steps. He had got in touch with Arafat and had "obtained from him a clear promise to exert a hundred per cent effort as you have requested." (Bandar had also brought a letter from Arafat stating the same promise.) The Crown Prince said that he had sent his Foreign Minister and Bandar to meet separately with the leaders of Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and Yemen, and had showed Bush's letter to them. "I wish to inform you that those Arab leaders find in your letter just what I did, the beginning of a bringing back of the peace process to the right path." He urged Bush to take charge of initiating the revival of the peace process. "The efforts exerted in the past by your predecessors were not in vain, but rather brought the parties closer," he said in closing his letter. "Today, we face a turning point that leads either to disaster, God forbid, or to peace. This historical turning point requires a historical leader who will prevent this disaster. I have great hope in you, Mr. President, that you will be that leader."

Bush agreed that he should make public his support for a Palestinian state, and the remainder of the meeting focussed on how to announce it. Powell was scheduled to leave Monday for a meeting in Peru, and they made plans to regroup on Thursday, after he returned. Bandar continued to work on the proposals, and on Monday night, September 10th, he floated in the indoor pool at his house in McLean, contentedly smoking a cigar.

Bandar slept late on the morning of September 11th. He was walking across his bedroom when he glanced at one of the ten television screens he kept on and saw fire coming out of one of the World Trade Center towers. "The first thing that came to my mind was that I'm going next week to the U.N. I am going to change my hotel and I am going to go to one of those hotels where you can live on the third or second floor," he recalled. "King Hussein of Jordan, bless his soul, used to tell me, 'Bandar, take my advice. Always stay on the first floor.' I said, 'Why, Majesty?' and he said, 'This fire. Or somebody starts shooting you. You jump out the window you break a leg, but if you are forty feet . . .' " Then he saw the second plane coming. "I had the same feeling I had when Rabin was assassinated," he said. "I almost had a heart attack. And the first thing that came to my mind was 'I hope it's not an Arab, because it would be war.' And I had the same feeling here. 'I hope they are not Arabs.' " When Tenet called the next night to tell him that fifteen of the nineteen hijackers appeared to have been Saudi nationals, Bandar recalled, "I felt the whole world collapse over my shoulders."

As the day wore on, Bandar watched the coverage. At one point, he saw Palestinian youths celebrating in the street. "I thought, My God, the whole impression this nation is going to have of us, the whole world, will be formed in the next two or three days." He saw a congressman warning, "We will remember those people."

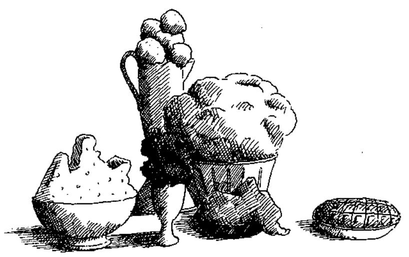
Two days after the attacks, the President asked Bandar to come to the White House. Bush embraced him and escorted him to the Truman balcony. Bandar had a drink and the two men smoked cigars. Bandar was in a daze, still hoping that the news of Saudi participation would turn out to be a mistake. Al Qaeda operatives, after all, had travelled on false passports in the past, and so far the only identity that appeared certain was that of Mohammed Atta, the ringleader, who was an Egyptian. Until then, Bush had seemed to Bandar to be in his father's shadow; he took more of his personality from his mother—he shot from the hip. But this day there was no bluster. At one point, Bush told Bandar that if any Al Qaeda operatives were captured, "if we can't get them to coöperate, we'll hand them over to you." The clear implication was that the Saudis could do whatever they wanted to elicit information from suspects. A few days later, Bandar helped arrange to get bin Laden family members out of the United States, a move that was made under the supervision of the F.B.I. but caused public consternation.

On September 18th, Condoleezza Rice called Bandar to tell him that the President wanted to see him at the White House. Cheney and Rice were there when Bandar arrived; Bush's two dogs nudged people's legs, and Bush joked that he wanted to see a friendly face before his next meeting with Jacques Chirac, the President of France, who had been critical of him. ("Let him wait," Bush instructed at one point during the two-hour meeting, when an aide announced that Chirac had arrived.) Bandar advised Bush to be careful about his rhetoric; it was fine to put the fear of God in people but not to use words like "crusade," as he had two days earlier. Bush had visited a mosque the day before, taking off his shoes, and Saudi television had broadcast replays of the visit all day long.

On September 21st, Bandar returned to the White House, this time to meet with Bush and the Saudi Foreign Minister, Prince Saud al Faisal. Saud, Princeton-educated and a bit stuffy, pledged Saudi support, but he warned Bush that the fight could take time. In the long term, Bush needed to do something about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. "Use this opportunity to do something great," Saud said. As Bandar recalled the conversation, "We said, 'Let's keep our eye on the ball on this, let's not let anybody distract us.' " He added, "It is always dangerous to leave the Middle East to our own, because we can manage to find something wrong that could blow everything up."

The Saudis were worried about terrorist strikes in their own country, but they wanted their American allies to trust them. In one important move, the Saudis began to give the Pakistanis their daily oil allotment—almost two hundred thousand barrels—at no charge, as an incentive to coöperate with the Americans; they have continued to do so. As law-enforcement and intelligence agents travelled between Riyadh and C.I.A. headquarters, in Langley, Virginia, the Saudis let the C.I.A. know about telephone calls that they'd intercepted between key Al Qaeda operatives congratulating each other after September 11th, and about calls from bin Laden family members who had gone into hiding. The help was big and small, in Bandar's view. They passed along another offer of help from Libya's Qaddafi; they helped to trace a pre-9/11 phone conversation, between someone in Afghanistan and someone in Saudi Arabia, that eventually led to the arrest of thirty-five Al Qaeda suspects in Saudi Arabia.

None of this did much to stanch the anti-Saudi feeling in the United States. Commentators and politicians complained about Wahhabism's being taught in Saudi schools. Prince Naif bin Abdul Aziz, the Minister of the Interior, gave an interview in an Arab newspaper in which he blamed the Jews for the terror attacks: "Who benefitted from the events of 9/11? I think they"—the Zionists—"are behind these events." There were press stories that the Saudis were not being helpful enough, in terms of either military support or intelligence sharing. Saudi Arabia is "funding hatred," Senator Joseph Biden, who was then the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said. These attacks put the Saudis and Bandar in an even more delicate position: the ruling Saud family allied itself with Wahhabism's founder more than two centuries ago, and the partnership had been instrumental in keeping the royal family in power; Wahhabism also inspired Saudi support for terror organizations. "We said, 'You preach and I fight,' " Bandar told me last month, and added, "The reality is that we are the only government system where the leadership is more forward-looking than the public, and that is a big problem."

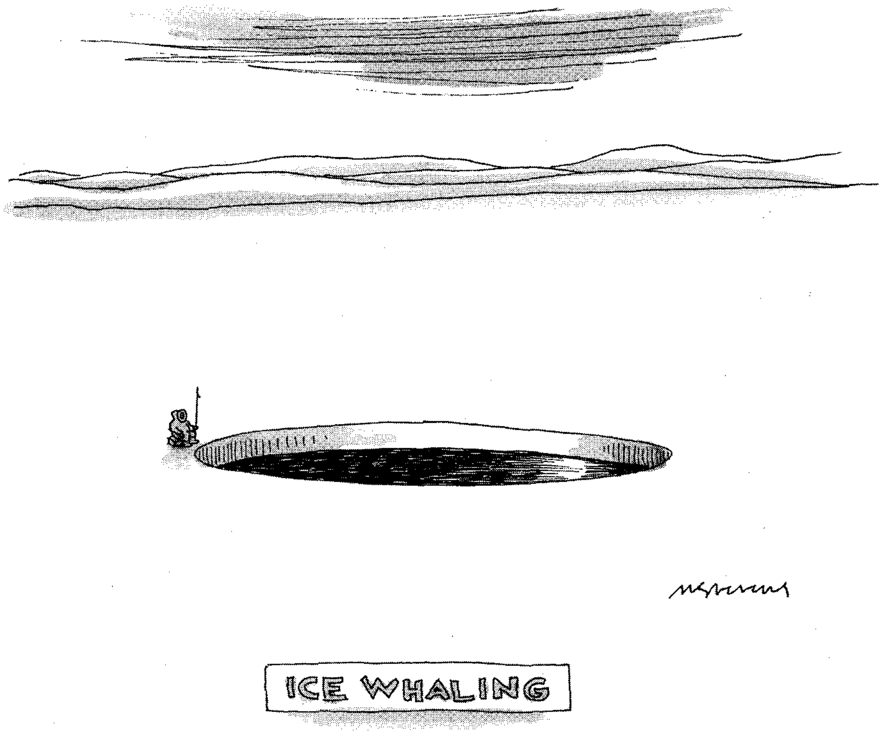


Bandar acknowledged the Saudi hijackers, but he called them loners and misfits. Bush, in a press conference on September 24, 2001, said that the Saudis had "been nothing but coöperative." A couple of months after the terrorist strikes, Tenet privately called Saudi coöperation "fantastic," and Dale Watson, who was then the F.B.I.'s chief of counterterrorism, told me that the Saudis were doing whatever they were asked to do.

Bandar believed that before September 11th Saudi Arabia had been at least as vigilant about Al Qaeda as the United States, and certainly more vigilant than Britain or Germany. I later asked Louis Freeh, the former F.B.I. director, whether Bandar was right in asserting that the Saudis were working hard to pursue bin Laden before September 11th. Freeh, who is now a senior vice-chairman at the credit-card company MBNA, in Delaware, said, "From where I sat and from what I knew . . . Al Qaeda was more a threat to them than to the U.S., particularly prior to East Africa"—the United States Embassy bombings in 1998—"because of bin Laden's earlier activities. His whole focus was on toppling the royal family and getting the U.S. forces out of Saudi Arabia. The notion that the Saudis pulled their punches is not consistent with anything I knew or saw there."

Privately, Bandar noted that, as far back as early 1998, the Saudis had alerted the United States to the prominent and dangerous role played by an Al Qaeda operative named Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri. Nashiri's arrest this past November made front-page news, and he was identified as the leader of Al Qaeda's operations in the Gulf; the Saudis participated in the arrest. The Saudis had asked the United States for help in capturing Nashiri in the winter of 1998, after they found three buried suitcases containing nine antitank Sagger missiles and identified him as the leader of Al Qaeda in Saudi Arabia. (The missiles were apparently intended for use against the royal family.)

C.I.A. and F.B.I. sources confirmed that Bandar had asked the White House and the C.I.A. for help in capturing Nashiri, who had apparently fled to Yemen, and they acknowledged that his request was not treated aggressively until later, when Nashiri was identified as one of the strategists behind the East Africa Embassy bombings and the attack on the U.S.S. Cole, in the fall of 2000. "I'm not superstitious, but it sure is a bad omen," Bandar said, in October of 2001. "Every time we lose track of this guy, something bad happens."



In early November of 2001, Saud al-Faisal, the Saudi Foreign Minister, who was in Washington, told the *Times* that Bush's unwillingness to force a Middle East solution "makes a sane man go mad"—despite private views in Saudi Arabia about Arafat's untrustworthiness. In February, the Crown Prince publicly offered to normalize relations between the Arab states and Israel if Israel withdrew from all the occupied territories.

Bush, in a series of comments, seemed to vacillate between supporting Israel's right to defend itself against terrorist attacks as it saw fit and urging Israel to exercise restraint. In April, Bandar, in a speech at the University of Oklahoma, seemed to signal a growing disillusionment with the Bush Administration. "I'm proud, not ashamed, to be a friend of the United States," he said, and he added, "But I'm frustrated." A few days later, Bush called Sharon "a man of peace." On April 16th, the White House announced that Crown Prince Abdullah planned to visit Bush at his ranch in Crawford. The circumstances were not promising. Abdullah's opinion of Bush was increasingly unfavorable, and by this time Bush had begun to declare that one of his goals was "regime change" in Iraq. Saudi support was essential, but unless something was done about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Saudis could not oppose another Arab country, not even Iraq.

On April 24th, the eve of the visit, Bandar received a private briefing from one of the President's senior officials: Bush, he was told, was unaware of what was happening in the streets of the West Bank or Gaza. "This guy doesn't watch TV—he just doesn't know this stuff," the official said, adding that Bush's aides, many of whom were staunchly pro-Israel, shielded him. Bandar was in a hotel in Houston preparing Abdullah for his meeting with Bush the next morning. Bandar wanted Bush to see what Arabs saw daily on Al Jazeera, hoping that it would open his eyes, and so his aides were trying to get photographs. Eventually, they were able to find some, mostly pictures of dead Palestinian children—a five-year-old with a bullet wound to his head, a child cut in half. He did not want to show the most gruesome; the purpose was not to make Bush sick.

Bandar knew that if Bush was unaware of views within the Arab world, he couldn't understand the impact that the Palestinian-Israeli conflict was having in the region. Already the trip was becoming something of a fiasco. On Abdullah's first day in Houston, the White House had faxed Bandar a draft of a proposed communiqué, to be released by the two leaders following their meeting, which seemed to place all the blame for the increase in violence on Arafat and the Palestinians. "This is ridiculous—this is unacceptable," Bandar said to an aide, and he picked up the phone to call Powell. The Secretary of State claimed that he hadn't seen the latest version, and had rejected previous drafts. The draft had come from Vice-President Cheney's office, the rationale being that Abdullah is the Vice-President of Saudi Arabia. Bandar faxed back his rejection to the White House and warned that Cheney should not under any circumstances give a copy of it to the Crown Prince.

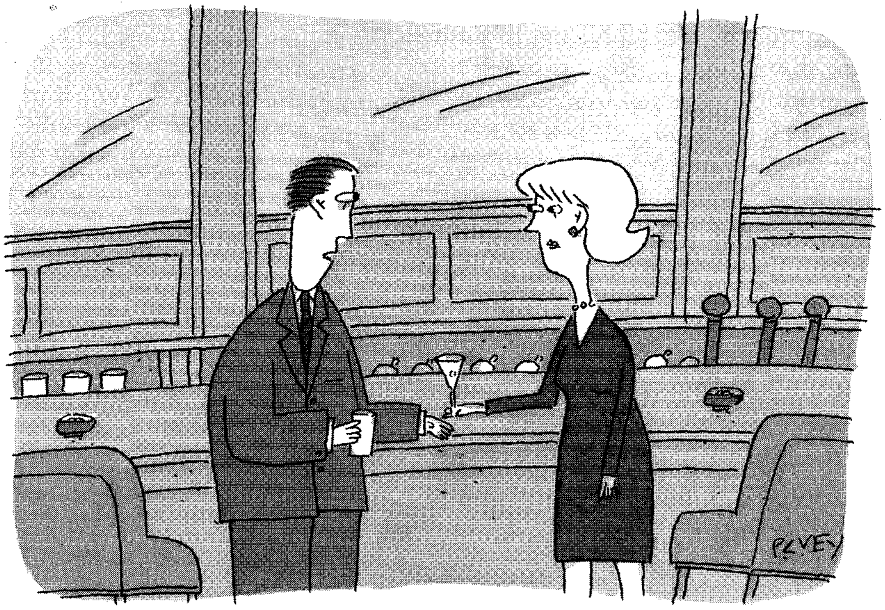
A meeting with Cheney and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld in Houston hadn't gone well, either. Rumsfeld had spent most of the meeting giving the Crown Prince a lengthy presentation on how much more accurate the American weaponry used in Afghanistan was than that used in the Gulf War. The Crown Prince was also given a new draft of the proposed communiqué, one that left the impression that the discussion of the Middle East crisis was secondary to issues like the Saudi desire to join the World Trade Organization. The Crown Prince had expected that the communiqué was a chance to offer a bold agreement on a peace initiative. Do they think I'll be happy just because I came to the ranch? he asked. That I want to say we met and had fun?

Early the next morning, after the Crown Prince's plane arrived in Waco, Powell joined Abdullah, Saud, and Bandar for the drive to Crawford. Powell had heard discouraging reports about the meeting with Cheney and Rumsfeld, and it was clear that Abdullah was upset. Abdullah, speaking to Powell, stressed that he had put himself at great risk to meet with Bush. Arab friends, by phone, fax, and letter, were telling him not to go. He said that he intended to deliver a blunt message: that Bush had to get involved, and that he had to end the Israeli occupation—including the siege of Arafat in his compound.

With Bush were Cheney, Rice, Powell, and Andrew Card, the President's chief of staff. With the Crown Prince were Bandar, Rihab Massoud, the Embassy's chargé d'affaires, and Saud. The Crown Prince said that he was disappointed by the proposed talking points; he repeatedly said that Bush had to do something to end the occupation. Abdullah emphasized the danger to the region; there was rioting in Bahrain, the most peaceful of countries. Egypt was in trouble, and so was Jordan—Jordan could go up in flames. But when the Crown Prince pressed him for the details of a plan to end the occupation, Bush and his advisers kept saying that they had told Sharon to get out of the territories.

Abdullah told Bush that he had no idea of the risk he had taken in coming to Crawford; he seemed to be deeply frustrated. "I will get on my aircraft and go home," witnesses recalled him saying. "I will tell people I have tried. I have delivered my message to the President and maybe you didn't understand. . . . I have tried and you cannot do anything. . . . I cannot go on as if nothing has happened. I am going to leave and say I have failed, not you. I have failed by not convincing you, by not persuading you with clearer facts."

Bush replied that he didn't want the Crown Prince to fail. Powell stood up and pulled Bandar outside. Standing nose to nose on the porch, the two started to argue. "What the hell are you guys doing?" Powell demanded of Bandar, according to two Administration sources. "You came here and expected us to do it in the same day you're here? In three hours?" Bush, curious at the sight, joined them on the porch, listening to the exchange. He seemed surprised at how intense and emotional everyone was. Bandar said to Powell, "Well, we told you what we needed. We communicated two days ago, and we thought we'd hear something last night. We didn't hear anything. You've known this is what he needed."



"Want to come up to my place and deal with the moral implications?"

The exchange moved back inside, and Powell pressed Abdullah to stay. "You can't stand that kind of failure. Neither can we, and, more important, the situation can't," Powell said to Abdullah, according to Administration sources. Bush, Powell said, needed time to try to do what Abdullah had asked. Finally, Abdullah announced that he would remain if Powell was serious about fixing the problem, and he and Bush resumed their discussion. But this time they would meet with only a translator, and discard the talking points, which seemed to make everyone nervous. Bandar, Saud, and Massoud left the room, with Cheney, Powell, Rice, and Card, and waited as the two leaders talked. Cheney, who was on crutches because he had injured a foot, hardly said a word. Once thought to be an ally, Cheney was increasingly perceived by the Saudis as insensitive to what was happening in the region. His silence intensified that feeling.

The meeting was scheduled to last twenty minutes, but Bush and Abdullah talked for two hours. At one point, the Crown Prince handed Bush the photographs of the dead Palestinian children. Do you think it's right? he asked. Bush appeared surprised by the photographs and his eyes seemed to well up. One person familiar with the conversation summarized Bush's comments: "I want peace. I don't want to see any people killed on both sides. I think God loves me. I think God loves the Palestinians. I think God loves the Israelis. We cannot allow this to continue." At one point, Bush told Abdullah that he believed Muslims and Israelis were all God's children and that God didn't want to see children from either side die. The meeting ended with both leaders promising to deliver the other side: Abdullah pledged to rein in Arafat and Bush to rein in Sharon.

Someone suggested a break for lunch. Before beginning to eat, Bush bowed his head and reached for Saud's hand. "Let us pray," he said. A look of panic came over the Crown Prince, who was unfamiliar with the Christian custom of saying grace before meals. "What is he doing?" he whispered to an aide sitting nearby. "What should I do?" Powell also looked stricken, as if he couldn't believe what Bush was saying in front of his Muslim guests.

Abdullah later told others that he had

been impressed with the seriousness of Bush's religious convictions. Bush called Sharon, who ended the Israeli siege of Arafat's compound. Over the next several months, some progress was made, although it was eclipsed by more suicide bombings and new reprisals from Israel. In January, Bush privately assured the Crown Prince that he would re-start the peace process when the war in Iraq was over. Late last week, Bush announced his long-promised "road map" for peace in the region.

On August 6th, the Washington *Post* reported that a Rand Corporation analyst briefing a top Pentagon advisory board earlier that summer had described Saudi Arabia as an enemy of the United States. A week later, nearly three thousand relatives of the victims of the September 11th attacks filed a private lawsuit against members of the Saudi royal family, accusing them of having financial ties to Al Qaeda. Lawyers for the plaintiffs alleged that some of the financing for Al Qaeda had come from Saudi charitable organizations; among the defendants was Bandar's father, Prince Sultan, who oversees one of the largest charitable foundations in Saudi Arabia. (Last March, the *Times* reported that the Administration and the Saudis tried to close two branches of a Saudi charity suspected of aiding extremists under cover of supporting Islamic schools and orphanages. Branches in Bosnia and Somalia were shut down, but it wasn't clear whether the charity's activities actually stopped.)

These events, particularly the Pentagon briefing, caused an uproar in Saudi Arabia, even though Bush and Administration officials said that neither reflected the position of the American government. Bush invited Bandar to Crawford. At the end of last August, Bandar flew from Aspen to Texas and picked up his wife, Haifa, who was there with some of their children visiting their second-oldest son, a student at Baylor University, in Houston. The family went on to Crawford, where, after a while, Bush and Bandar broke off for a private meeting. Bush wanted Bandar to know that he was trying to send a message; he'd learned from his father the value of access to a President. To the Saudis, he was saying that he had invited Bandar to the same place where he had invited only three foreign leaders: Tony Blair, Vladimir Putin, and Crown Prince Abdullah. To the American public, he was saying that he was fed up with having to insist that Saudi Arabia was coöperating with America.

Bush also wanted it known that he was serious about Iraq. He asked Bandar what had happened with the Clinton Administration, and Bandar described how, in October of 1994, King Fahd had told Clinton that neither country could afford to have Saddam Hussein remain in power, from a military, political, or economic point of view. Fahd, Bandar said, suggested that Saudi Arabia and the United States spend as much on covert operations to get Saddam as they had in Afghanistan to oust the Soviets—about a billion dollars each. The Saudis, in fact, were willing to spend more. Fahd told Clinton that he had rounded up support for the plan from Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and even Iran. They shook hands on it, Bandar told Bush, but nothing came of it. "For six years, we've been given the runaround," he said. "Therefore everybody here"—in Saudi Arabia—"adjusted to cover their rear ends."

Bandar told Bush that he and Turki bin Faisal, who was then the intelligence chief, had regularly called the National Security Council staff or the C.I.A. director, John Deutch, to ask about progress. Deutch, he said, had at one point suggested that perhaps the two sides should contribute twenty million dollars each—such a small sum that it began to raise questions in Bandar's mind about America's seriousness. When Tenet replaced Deutch and Berger took over as national-security adviser, Bandar continued to press both men on the covert plan. Eventually, Bandar told Bush, "we became convinced the Americans had no intention to remove Saddam and they were happy with the status quo." A spokesman for the Clinton White House said, "It is true that we were working with the Saudis. It is not true that we were not taking this seriously. It did not succeed." The spokesman, who asked Clinton a series of questions that I had submitted to him, said that he could not answer any questions about the agreement between Fahd and Clinton: "This is just one piece I'm not going to get into in any great detail because it's very classified kind of stuff."

Bush asked Bandar to tell him what Saddam was like. Bandar was certain that Saddam would not forgive or forget his defeat in the Gulf War, and that any talk of compromise or containment was futile. It was his personal opinion, not his government's, but he believed that either Saddam would kill all those associated with the Gulf War or they would have to kill him. But, most important, Saddam knew that the only way to stay alive was to stay in power. Bush wondered how he stayed in power after killing so many people; he said he couldn't understand "how those dumb son-in-laws" went back—referring to Saddam's in-laws, who several years ago returned from Jordan, after being promised safe passage, and were executed. Bandar replied that Saddam stayed in power because he was ruthless, and he also told Bush that even though many European and Arab countries were saying publicly that they opposed a military effort to topple Saddam, they were saying something else in private. After the meeting, the White House released a photograph of Bush sitting in a chair and Bandar perched on the arm of another, towering over him. The two men seem to be talking intimately and intensely, like two old friends. In Saudi Arabia, at least, the photograph carried great symbolic value.

In the months since the meeting in Crawford, Bandar's chief focus has been on what appears to be an almost certain war with Iraq. At the end of January, Bandar and Saud met with Colin Powell on an airport runway in Zurich to report on meetings with Pervez Musharaff, and on what some Arab countries, including Saudi Arabia, were doing to encourage Saddam to go into exile. (The Saudis, a source told me last week, were using other means to win support for the United States: they were about to freeze a pending eight-hundred-million-dollar contract to buy tanks from the French.) In his travels, Bandar, who has always prided himself on his realism, delivered a similar message: War was coming. Nothing could be done to stop it. Their national interests coincided with those of the United States. "It's a very simple equation" if you live in the region, Bandar told me. "If you cannot stop it, then it is almost an abdication of responsibility for you not to say, 'O.K., I don't want the war, but the war is going to happen. What is it that I can do to maximize my national interest? What is it that I need to do to have the day after more positive than now?' " ♦

A CRITIC AT LARGE

GHOST SONATA

What happened to German music?

BY ALEX ROSS

Dr. Mengele, we are told, sometimes relaxed to the strains of "Tristan und Isolde" after performing his experiments. The Berlin Staatskapelle played Siegfried's Funeral Music at the state funeral of S.S. Obergruppenführer Reinhard Heydrich, whose middle name was Tristan. Adolf Hitler, intending to make Wagner's operas the liturgy of a new religion, saluted the 1933 Nuremberg Party Congress with a quotation from "Die Meistersinger": "*Wach' auf!*" For a time, Hitler's speeches on cultural matters were preceded by excerpts from the symphonies of Anton Bruckner. That horrible musical scene in "Schindler's List," in which an S.S. man plays Bach on an upright piano while Jews are being shot around him, is apparently based on fact. At one of the Berlin Philharmonic's final performances of the Nazi era, members of the Hitler Youth handed out cyanide capsules to members of the audience.

There are many such anecdotes about music in the Third Reich, and they serve to back up Thomas Mann's controversial but not easily refuted contention that in Nazi Germany the greatest art was implicated in the greatest evil. The association of classical music with spiritual corruption has become so prevalent that it is now a staple of popular culture. Ben Hecht, in a wartime polemic, wrote of Germans who "listen to Beethoven and dream of murder," and such images multiplied in movies of the postwar years. Where musicians were once the noble, fragile heroes of high-class studio pictures, after the war they acquired a hint of sadism, of cultivated malice. Now when any self-respecting Hollywood arch-criminal sets out to annihilate mankind he listens to a little opera to get in the mood. Even Hannibal Lecter, moving his bloodstained fingers in time to the "Goldberg Variations," might be distantly echoing the Nazis' twin enthusiasms for music and death.

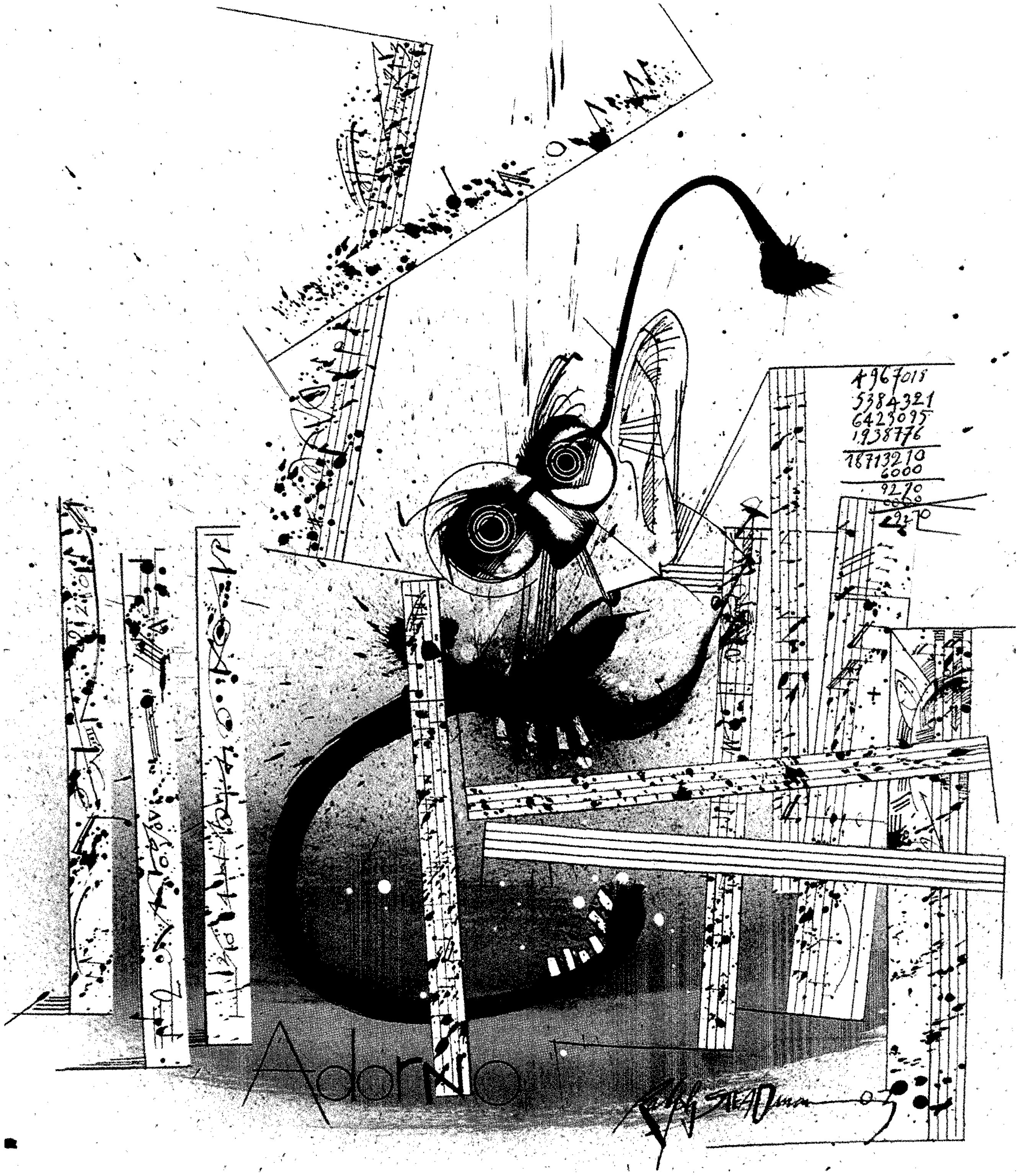
Hitler seemingly tainted the art; he made it dubious. No music was more suspect than the Führer's favorite late-Romantic strains of Wagner, Bruckner, and Strauss, a few bars of which are enough to give Holocaust survivors flashbacks of horror. Conversely, it was thought that no music resisted the Nazi taint more thoroughly than the modernist school that Hitler detested. Thus did Arnold Schoenberg, the inventor of atonality and of twelve-tone composition, become a heroic figure in the postwar years; he had stayed, it seemed, absolutely pure. After 1945, a new morality of music evolved, based on two questionable but potent syllogisms: (1) if Hitler liked it, it must be bad; (2) if Hitler hated it, it must be good.

There are many things to be said against this way of thinking, the first of which is "So what?" The fact that Hitler loved music says as much about the nature of his crimes as the fact that he loved dogs. All it really tells us is that he emerged out of a culture that had already made music a religion. Hitler loved Beethoven because everyone loved Beethoven. The orchestras of Auschwitz and Theresienstadt played Beethoven, too, with desperate devotion. The threadbare ranks of the German resistance had as many music lovers as the entire upper echelon of the Nazi Party. Hans von Dohnányi, one of those who plotted against Hitler, was the son of the composer Ernst von Dohnányi and the father of the future conductor Christoph von Dohnányi; he, too, listened to Beethoven as he dreamed.

Roman Polanski's film "The Pianist" tells the true story of the Polish Jewish pianist Wladyslaw Szpilman, who was saved from certain death by an anti-Nazi Wehrmacht officer named Wilm Hosenfeld. As Szpilman plays Chopin's Ballade in G Minor for his enemy, each man seems to save the other. What this magnificent movie suggests is that music was in the end a neutral ground—another of the compromised geographies on which the Second World War was fought. Today, younger composers can avail themselves of Wagner and Strauss without any sense that they are treading on forbidden territory.

Except in Germany: there a deep mistrust of the musical past lingers. After Auschwitz, the thinking goes, the comfort of C major is taboo. The entire classical and Romantic tradition remains roped off, like a crime scene under investigation. Spending time in Berlin last fall, I noticed how often Nazism was invoked in artistic matters—not as history but as a negative example for contemporary style. I heard an architectural guide condemn one of the new buildings in Potsdamer Platz for having too many right angles, and thereby reviving a totalitarian aesthetic. Much the same critique extends to new music that uses too many major and minor chords: even a few of these are liable to raise suspicions of neo-fascist kitsch. It is understandable that such extreme attitudes took hold immediately after the war, when Germany felt the need to wipe the slate clean and build anew. But why are they so pervasive five decades later? Why do German composers still fetishize dissonance and make a virtue of the ugly? This overweening self-denial has become absurd, and has contributed to the widespread perception that German music came to a sudden end with the death of Richard Strauss, in 1949.

"After Auschwitz" is the signature slogan of the philosopher, sociologist, music critic, sometime composer, and all-around conversation-stopper Theodor Wiesengrund Adorno, who, more than thirty years after his death, still reigns as the godfather of German musical thought. There is no better way to understand what has happened to German music than to spend a little time in



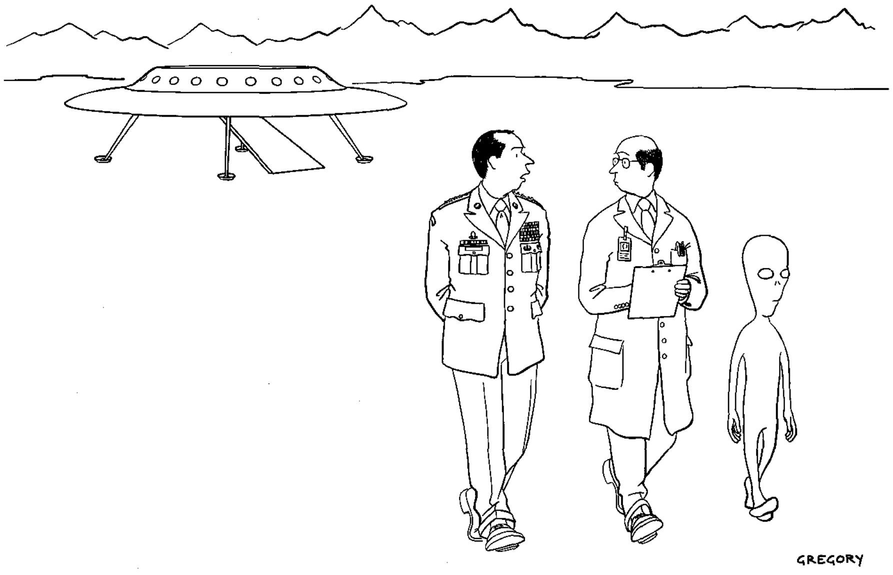
More than thirty years after Theodor Adorno's death, German composers are still in thrall to his difficult and dire theories.

RALPH STEADMAN

Adorno's world. For most American readers, he is an obscure bogeyman of post-Marxist social theory, the author of such impenetrable tomes as "Negative Dialectics." Readers of Thomas Mann know him as the musical expert who furnished material for "Doctor Faustus," including a large chunk of the Devil's disquisitions. In Germany, however, Adorno is an intellectual folk hero, a symbol even to those who have never tried to read him. Perhaps the principal source of his authority is the fact that, as a German of partly Jewish descent in American exile, he recognized, as early as the autumn of 1944, the enormity of what was happening in the death camps. Adorno thus became the prophet of a modern Germany obsessed with understanding its past. Next September 11th is the centennial of his birth (how like Adorno to be born on that day), and one learns from a recent full-page feuilleton on the philosopher in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* that no fewer than four biographies are on the way—a generous spotlight to shine on a man who lived life almost exclusively inside his own cranium. Readers can content themselves in the current season with a seven-hundred-and-forty-three-page compendium of Adorno's writings entitled "Essays on Music" (California).

I studied Adorno in college, at a time when it seemed provocative to read books about Charles Manson and listen to rock bands that sounded like coffee grinders. My post-adolescent mind thrilled to the opulent negativity of Adorno's proclamations, some of which I can still recite off the top of my head: "To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric." "The fully enlightened earth radiates disaster triumphant." "Every work of art is an uncommitted crime." "The whole is the false." Adorno is the dark prince of intellectual life—the connoisseur of the dense, the difficult, the dire. He never met an apocalypse he didn't like. But he is not quite as solemn as he seems; he can be hilariously bitchy. Here he is on the nascent American gym culture of the forties: "The very people who burst with proofs of exuberant vitality could easily be taken for prepared corpses, from whom the news of their not-quite-successful decease has been withheld for reasons of population policy." On young left-wing intellectuals: "To see them as renegades is to assess them too high; they mask mediocre faces with horn-rimmed spectacles betokening 'brilliance,' though with plain-glass lenses, solely in order to better themselves in their own eyes and in the general rat-race." Adorno's sentences twist around like scorpions to deliver a valedictory sting.

It is easy to see why Adorno has proved so durable in Germany, which, having exhumed its own past, now wishes to confess the sins of the rest of the world. When Adorno lived in America, from 1938 to 1949, he advanced the now familiar argument—practically printed on the menus of European cafés—that American culture was fascism with a happy face. Corporate capitalism, Adorno said, was turning human beings into twitching drones, though its methods were subtle enough to conceal from almost everyone the barbed wire at the edges of the theme park. Notorious among his writings were his musings on jazz, in which he tried to find a sinister, quasi-fascistic energy in collective improvisation and jitterbug dancing. Richard Leppert, the editor of "Essays on Music," bravely defends these tirades; he wishes us to believe that Adorno was attacking not authentic African-American composers such as Duke Ellington but white jazzmen like Paul Whiteman—those who appropriated the original "hot music." Indeed, when Adorno described thirties-era popular music as a "confusing parody of colonial imperialism," he was on to something. But if he had any positive feelings about the work of black musicians he failed to put them down on paper. The only jazzman named in the essay "On Jazz" is Ellington.



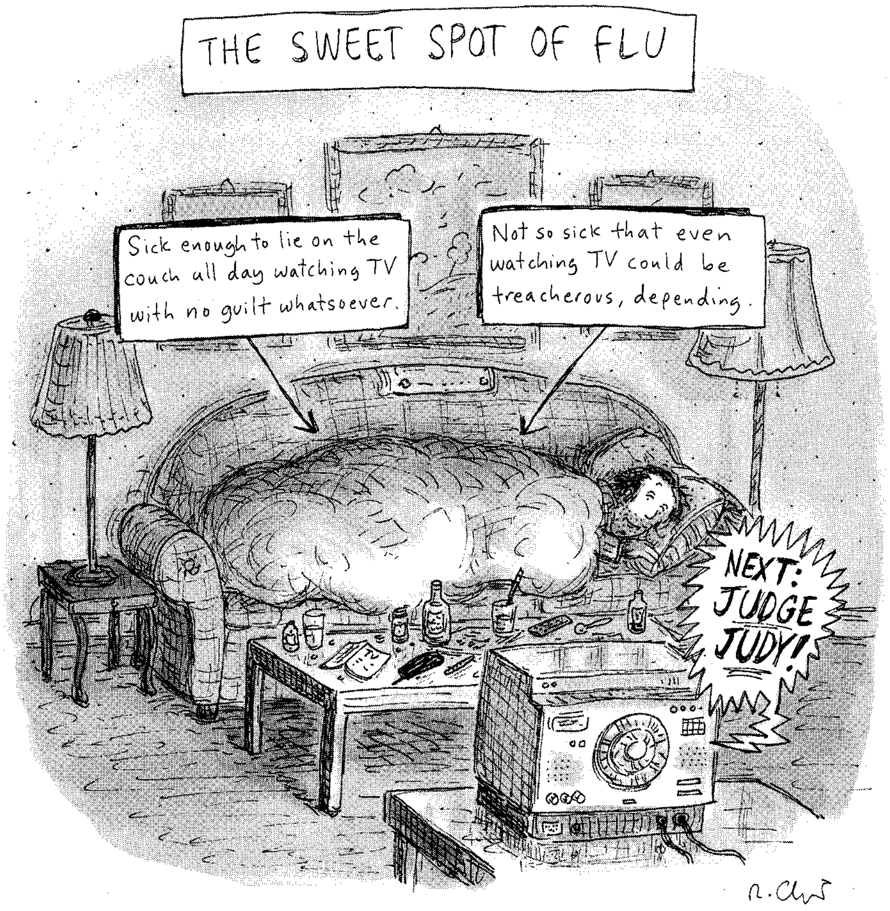
"This galaxy he's from—ask him if it's got oil."

Adorno's generalizations are sometimes so brazenly sweeping as to make you want to throw his books against the wall. Here is a choice pronunciamento from his New York period: "It is highly doubtful if the boy in the subway whistling the main theme of the finale of Brahms's First Symphony actually has been gripped by that music." I think police records would show that the last boy to whistle Brahms on the subway was beaten to a pulp in the seventies. "When people dance to jazz, they do not dance for sensuous pleasure or in order to obtain release," he says, in another essay. "Rather they merely depict the gestures of sensuous human beings." This is the place to mention that Adorno, despite his mousy appearance, was reputed to have been an excellent dancer. Implicit in his assault on mass culture is the belief that any work of art that attracts large numbers of people has no value. This applies not just to popular music but also to classical music that has reached a wide audience. Adorno was never so ferocious as when writing about Arturo Toscanini, whose concerts on NBC radio attracted millions of listeners. Adorno was convinced that Toscanini's fans, like the boy in the subway, were too stupid—"retarded" was the word he used—to grasp the music of the Masters: "The consumer is really worshipping the money that he himself has paid for the ticket to the Toscanini concert." A footnote is called for: in 1938, when Adorno wrote these words, tickets to Toscanini's NBC concerts in Studio 8H were free.

Still, some of these poison darts hit their target. Adorno was certainly right when he said that radio broadcasts of classical music flattened its dynamic extremes and muted its colors, robbing it of passion and danger; today's soporific all-Pachelbel stations vindicate his critique. Pop-music scholars, for their part, stop short of dismissing Adorno out of hand and, indeed, routinely rejigger his aesthetics to serve their own ends. Greil Marcus, in his book "Lipstick Traces," ingeniously conscripted Adorno into the subversive élite of punk rock. It seems that almost everyone believes that ninety per cent of music is junk; we just can't agree on what constitutes the remaining ten per cent. Adorno is to be admired for lustily defending his chosen fraction—

he was a snob of deep conviction. Despite his Marxist trappings, he was really a bourgeois elegist, a prose poet singing of lost childhood realms. The son of a Frankfurt wine merchant, he was born into the last flowering of bourgeois culture, and he never came to terms with its overnight demise.

Tragically, Adorno was himself a victim of the shock tactics of pop culture. In April, 1969, a group of female activists interrupted his lecture "An Introduction to Dialectical Thinking" by flashing their breasts in his face and taunting him with flowers. He died a few months later, on August 6, 1969. It was twenty-four years to the day after the atomic destruction of Hiroshima.


THE SWEET SPOT OF FLU
Sick enough to lie on the couch all day watching TV with no guilt whatsoever.
Not so sick that even watching TV could be treacherous, depending.
NEXT: JUDGE JUDY!

• •

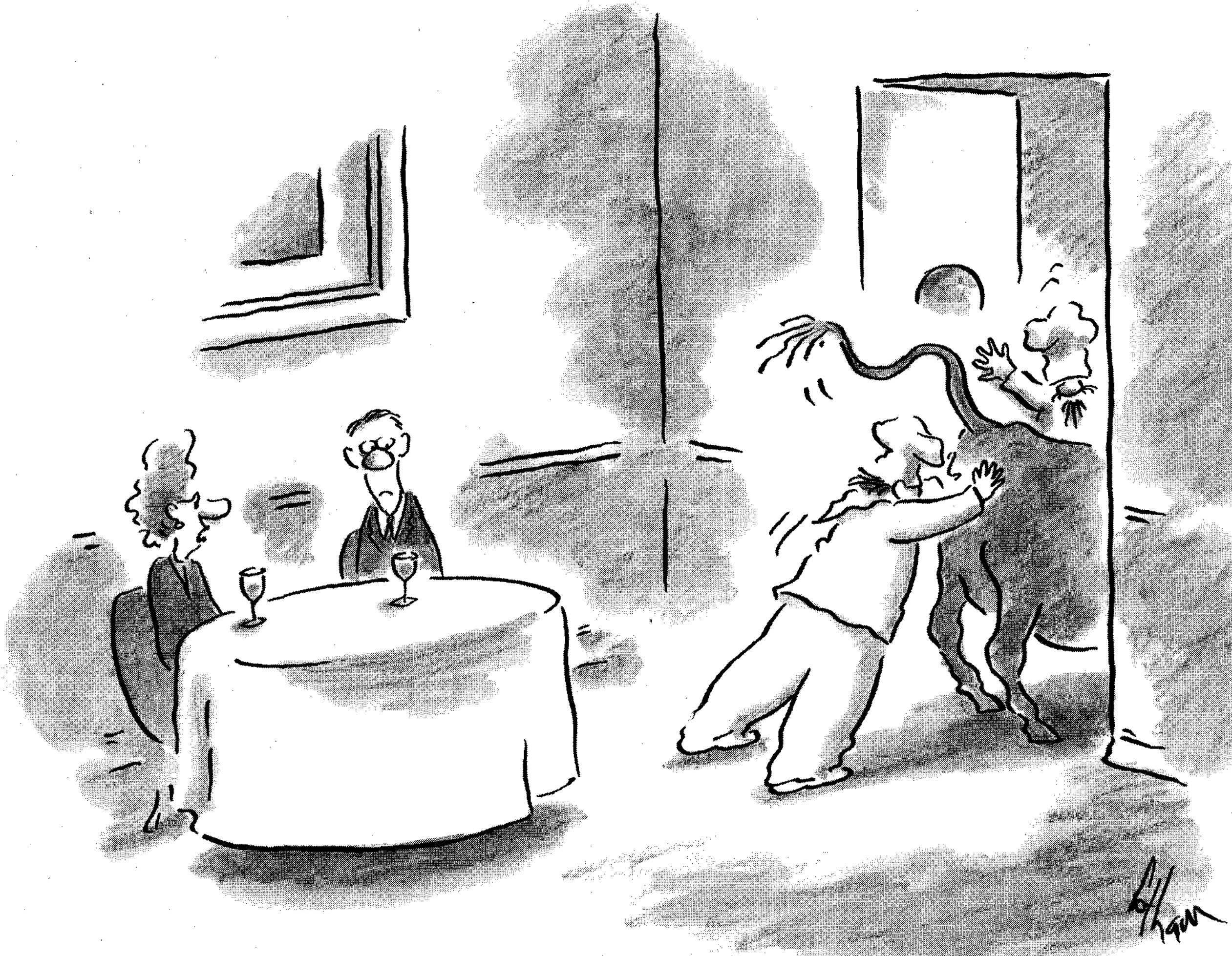
A composer of no small ability, and no large ability, either, Adorno studied in the nineteen-twenties with Alban Berg, Schoenberg's most gifted pupil. From Berg he absorbed the tenets of Schoenbergian philosophy, which held that music had to strike out into unknown regions in order to stay true to a Wagnerian ideology of progress. Adorno monumentalized Schoenberg's thought in "The Philosophy of New Music," published in 1949. This small book gave voice to the iconoclastic mentality of firebrands like Pierre Boulez and Karlheinz Stockhausen, who descended on modern-music gatherings in Darmstadt and Donaueschingen and forged the splintered sounds of the avant-garde. The "Philosophy," which still awaits a decent translation, argues that music must expunge all familiar sounds and conventional notions of the beautiful. In a world of triumphant kitsch, composition can justify its survival only by becoming a mirror image of physical and spiritual destruction. Adorno sounds a call to arms for those who wish to ride off into the sunset of avant-garde obscurity:

> [Modern music] has taken upon itself all the darkness and guilt of the world. All its happiness comes in the perception of misery; all its beauty comes in the rejection of beauty's illusion. Neither the individual nor the collective wants to have any part of it. It dies away unheard, without echo. When music is heard, it is shot through with time, like a shining crystal; unheard music drops into empty space like a rotten bullet. New music spontaneously takes aim at that final condition which mechanical music lives out hour by hour—the condition of absolute oblivion.

Such writing suggests the psychological state of one who has been deeply hurt by rejection, and who wishes to burn all bridges of reconciliation. It is the cry of a music lover who came into a world ruled by Mahler and Strauss, and lived into the time of Sinatra and the Beatles.

The "Philosophy" falls into two main sections, one devoted to the music of Schoenberg and the other to the music of Stravinsky. Schoenberg stood for the truth, for seeing the terror of the world as it was. Stravinsky, who, at the time of the "Philosophy," was still working in the neoclassical mode, stood for falsehood and regression. There was, of course, something fascistic about Stravinsky. Adorno did not base this argument on the fact that Stravinsky himself voiced sympathy for Mussolini in the nineteen-thirties; instead, he felt that a Fascist mentality was ingrained in the music, simply in its reassertion of tonality after Schoenberg's putative annihilation of it. Repeated readings of the "Philosophy" fail to disclose exactly which parts of a radiantly beautiful work like "Symphony of Psalms" display the authoritarian personality, but the argument goes something like this: Even though tonality has become irrational, Stravinsky forces it to remain in place, and mesmerizes his audience into accepting the unacceptable. Merely by choosing to write in the key of A minor, Stravinsky is acting like you-know-who. Adorno concludes, a little mysteriously, "The statement attributed to Hitler, that a man could die only for an idea that he does not understand, would be a good inscription for the gate of the neoclassical temple."

A writer who throws bombs of this kind should be very sure of his own ground. Adorno was not quite safe, in several ways. He came late to an affirmation of his Jewish roots, and his correspondence with Alban Berg contains moments of anti-Semitism. In 1933, Adorno advised his teacher not to feel solidarity with a Jewishness "about which one can ultimately have few illusions"; and he suggested that Berg pub-



"Yours is what's taking so long."

• •

licize his pure Aryan ancestry to the Reich Music Chamber, whose president was Richard Strauss. There are eerie moments when the agendas of Adorno and Hitler coincide. A 1933 essay entitled "Farewell to Jazz" begins by noting that radio broadcasts of jazz have been banned in Nazi Germany, and goes on to say, in so many words, "Good riddance." Interesting, too, is the way Adorno denounced the Weimar-era musical "Das Dreimäderlhaus" for abusing the sacred melodies of Schubert; Hitler made the same point in a speech of 1929.

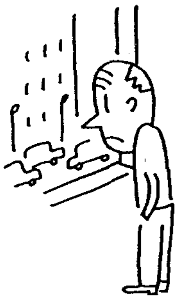
Adorno's subsequent thunderings about Auschwitz have a self-corrective aspect, as if he were making up for years of not quite looking evil in the face. Some skeptical commentators argue that he continued to promote a nationalist musical agenda, excoriating almost all composers who were not German or Austrian. It could be said that Adorno used the Holocaust a little too freely, a little too superciliously, as a way of escalating aesthetic battles that predated Hitler's rise to power. The phrase "after Auschwitz" sometimes comes crashing down like the sixteen-ton weight that ends certain Monty Python skits.

In 1949, it worked: "The Philosophy of New Music" wowed the confused young minds who were seeking new certitudes, new laws, new gods. Adorno, together with his comrade-in-arms Boulez, probably succeeded in frightening more than a few composers of the neoclassical type into thinking that their music was not just bad but criminal. It is instructive to look at the names of works that were played at Darmstadt from 1946 on. In the first few years, you see titles such as Sonatine, Suite for Piano, Chamber Symphony, Scherzo, and Concerto in E Flat. After 1949, the year of the "Philosophy," neoclassical titles dwindle and are replaced by phrases fit for a "Star Trek" episode: "Music in Two Dimensions," "Schipot," "Polyphonie X," "Syntaxis," "Anepigraphe." There was a fad for abstractions in the plural: "Perspectives," "Structures," "Quantities," "Configurations," "Interpolations." Audiences enjoyed "Spectogram," "Seismogramme," "Audiogramme," and "Sphenogramme." Emblematic was the career of the minor composer Hermann Heiss, who, back in the Nazi regime, had written a "Fighter Pilot March." At the first Darmstadt gathering, in 1946, he was represented by a Sonata for Flute and Piano. In 1956, sensing which way the wind was blowing, he showed up with "Expression K."

Adorno, who taught at Darmstadt for nine summers after his return to Germany, knew well that his beloved ideology of progress was yielding mixed results. To his credit, he subjected the modernism of his day to the same withering critique that he applied to Stravinsky and jazz. The saving grace of his writing, aside from its sheer tortured elegance, is that it often veers in unpredictable directions; one would expect no less from a man who in his student years was planning an opera about Tom Sawyer. The dirty secret of "The Philosophy of New Music" is that, even as it savages Stravinsky, it picks away at Schoenberg; this, perhaps, is the reason that Schoenberg instructed his wife, Gertrud, to keep Adorno away from his manuscripts. The twelve-tone method, Adorno said, tends to turn out same-sounding, deindividuated products, insidiously reflecting the mass-culture marketplace. The 1955 essay "The Aging of the New Music"—one of the highlights of "Essays on Music"—dissects the "sectarianism" and "academicism" of the new-music scene, the "cheapness of being daring," the fetishism of elaborate mathematical processes, the fascination with weird sound materials undigested by compositional logic, and so on. Leading composers, he says, "never get farther than abstract negation, and take off on an empty, high-spirited trip, through thinkably complex scores, in which nothing actually occurs." Music had passed the limit of what the ear could handle; one young composer at Darmstadt was said to be writing "the craziest gibberish" and "purest nonsense."

No doubt; but how was it given to Adorno to determine when and where the avant-garde had finally devolved into gibberish? Many would say that that point had arrived some time earlier. Like so many critics before him, Adorno jumped off the merry-go-round of progress and threw up his hands at the lunacy of the young. Indeed, in his later writings he seemed on the point of saying that a basic mistake might have been made somewhere along the line. "There is a possibility of reopening the question of harmony," he allowed. "Composite sounds may gain a specific significance again." Chords? Exciting! But he could not follow up on that tentative lead. Instead, the "negative" in "negative dialectics" really kicked into gear. Rather than move from one extreme to another, in dialectical mode, Adorno stopped in his tracks and sank into despair. There was no way, he said, to bring back the old chords. It would deny history; it would be an exercise in nostalgia—or, worse, a "positive lie." Better to contemplate the possibility of music's falling silent altogether. In his last book, "Aesthetic Theory," he wrote, "A latecomer among the arts, great music may well turn out to be an art form that was possible only during a limited period of human history."

This was the point at which Adorno—together with legions of German musical pundits and pontiffs who followed him—experienced a catastrophic failure of imagination. The claim that tonality had permanently disintegrated was arbitrary and without intellectual foundation; not even Schoenberg could endorse it in the end. The attempt to trash a masterpiece like "Symphony of Psalms" causes a visible strain; you don't believe that Adorno believes it. Much of his social history was bunk, too. He could not see that music had been commercialized before radio came along—that it was chopped to bits and consumed en masse even in the golden age of Mozart and Beethoven. The entire theory rests on the assumption that the twentieth century was a time of unprecedented suffering, which required radical new languages in art. If history and art obeyed such a tidy, tit-for-tat dynamic, then Italian painting after the Black Death, to take one of many possible counterexamples, would become inexplicable. The insistence on the traumatic uniqueness of one's individual moment is the mark of an immature mind; it is not so far removed from the rage of the teen-ager who runs up to his room and blasts Eminem from behind a locked door.



Last October, the Berlin Festival presented a concert of works by the twenty-eight-year-old Johannes Maria Staud, who is evidently a rising star in German music. The event took place in the chamber hall of the Philharmonie, and drew a small but avid crowd. The pre-concert chatter around me—from students in T-shirts and camouflage pants—promised some kind of display of youthful renewal. But the titles in the program—"Incipit," "Configurations/Reflet," "perhaps at first really only"—produced that familiar sinking feeling. Staud is a gifted, even brilliant composer; his works were finely crafted, clearly instrumented, charged with energy and humor. The rhythmic writing even sounded a bit pop, with thwacks of bass drum and splashes of hi-hat thrown in. All the same, to quote Beckett, the sun shone on the nothing new. The music had an antique flavor—the flavor of the fifties, of Darmstadt and Donaueschingen, of university research and Cold War worry, of men in short-sleeved button-down shirts and thick black glasses writing on chalkboards. Even the popular gestures recalled the fifties—bebop jazz and early rock and roll. It amazed me that this music was composed by someone born in 1974.

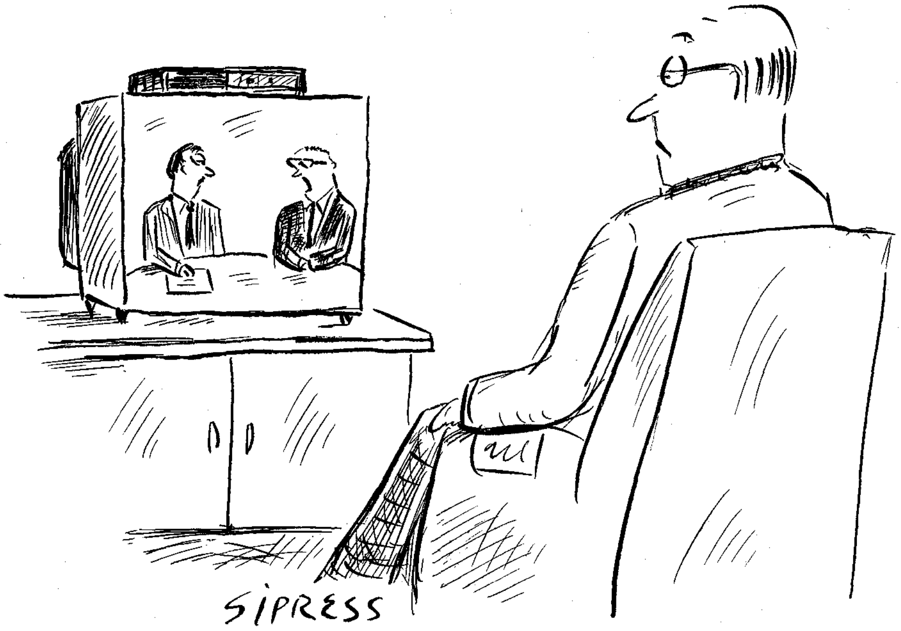
In America, England, Russia, and Scandinavia, among other places, composers have embraced a vast diversity of approaches to the problem of how to write classical music in the twenty-first century. Minimalism arrived decades ago; C major is back. Manifestos and theorizing have fallen out of vogue; composers are more likely to let their music speak for itself, or cite an image or story that inspired them. In Germany, however, dyspeptic complexity of the Adornian variety still holds sway. Everyone is writing fragments of sketches of pieces. Works are accompanied by notes that take longer to read than the music takes to play. Parodies of Adorno-ese proliferate. The gnarled art of the young Olga Neuwirth is said to be "running away from itself"; it is "a running away and a staying at the same time, in the passing of time, which is, however, no healing ointment." Notions of melody and harmony are verboten. Georg Friedrich Haas, the composer of a piece entitled ". . . ," says, in one program note, "I would like to avoid using the term 'theme.' " Sometimes composers allude in their works to the canonical repertory or parody a certain kind of Romantic phrase, but these *Zitate*, or citations, last for no more than a few seconds. They are marched in and out of the music as if under armed guard, with terrified looks on their faces.

Forty years ago, the big man in German music was Stockhausen, who unveiled revolutionary-sounding paradigms in almost every festival season. Stockhausen is still around, but is no longer taken very seriously, even though he plugs away on his mammoth days-of-the-week opera cycle, "Licht" (the last part, "Sunday," will be ready in 2005). The current "great man" is a sixty-seven-year-old experimentalist named Helmut Lachenmann, who, according to the New Grove Dictionary of Music, specializes in "the exploitation of loud and unconventional sounds more in the nature of noise, of the kind generally suppressed in traditional instrumental performance." Curious readers are referred to supplementary writings such as "Helmut Lachenmann's Concept of Rejection" and "Moments of Irritation." The composer states, "My music has been concerned with rigidly constructed denial, with the exclusion of what appears to me as listening expectations performed by society." Although Lachenmann has attacked Adorno as a "naïve Romantic," he honors the Master's spirit. There is no denying Lachenmann's virtuosity; he is able to arrange the unlikeliest assortment of sounds—flutes blown at the wrong end, cellos bowed in places other than the strings, paper crinkled, sheet metal banged with rods—into an intermittently gripping narrative. His most formidable achievement is the opera "The Little Match Girl," based on Hans Christian Andersen's tale of the child who freezes to death on New Year's Eve after lighting matches to keep herself warm. The Andersen tale is interwoven with quotations from Leonardo da Vinci and from the leftist radical Gudrun Ensslin, one of the Baader-Meinhof gang, who was jailed for firebombing two Frankfurt department stores. She wrote, "Criminal, madman, and suicide. . . . Their criminality, their madness, their death express the revolt of the destroyed against his destruction." A surefire holiday favorite.

"What do you do when you can't sleep?"

A key concept in the Lachenmannian Weltanschauung is contamination. The commentator in New Grove writes, "Lachenmann has repeatedly emphasized the novelty and uncontaminated aspect of his sound worlds." In case we missed the point, we also hear of "sonorities which had remained unused and hence uncontaminated in the past"; of sounds "not yet devalued by excessive use"; of "aesthetic experience largely undistorted by habit." This thinking is of a piece with Adorno's potshots at Toscanini, and goes back to Schoenberg's epic epigram "If it is art, it is not for all, and if it is for all, it is not art." The notion that popularity destroys the purity of art is so cherished in German-speaking lands—and, it should be said, on American college campuses—that it takes on the solidity of religious belief. One may as well try to argue with the men ranting in Times Square. But the fact is that mass culture has co-opted the weird sounds of the avant-garde as thoroughly as it has the splashy chords of Romanticism. Every variety of dissonance, microtonal writing, and unpitched noise has been used in a hundred horror movies and suspense thrillers. And there is something creepy about the talk of "contamination" and "taint." It is redolent of turn-of-the-century pseudoscientific textbooks about the invasion of German culture by alien bodies. At the very least, Hitler still casts a mysterious spell over the music scene: the project of writing according to his likes and dislikes gives him a power that should long ago have been denied.

Reading between the lines of Adorno's brilliant, maddening books, I suspect that he knew exactly what had gone wrong in German music but could not bring himself to admit it. He might have put it this way: The pure is the false. The aesthetic of rejection will always depend on the music it excludes. Continuously present in atonal music is the C-major triad that the composer scans his pitch charts to avoid. The attempt to abolish kitsch produces kitsch of a higher absurdity—an overebullient marketplace devoid of consumers. Filling the empty seats at correctly subversive new-music concerts are the laughing ghosts of a formerly outraged bourgeoisie that died out long before today's radical star was born. This scorched-earth music yearns for Hitler's hate; in some inverted way, it still salutes the Führer, by fanatically disobeying his orders.



"It could go badly, or it could go well, depending on whether it goes badly or well."

German music is not entirely a wasteland of modernist conceits. A few composers have escaped the cul-de-sac of theory and have written works of immediate sensual appeal. One is Wilhelm Killmayer, a seventy-five-year-old minor master whose music is almost entirely unknown in this country. Without resorting to pastiche, Killmayer has found a kind of secret doorway to the Romantic tradition of Schubert and Schumann; his "Heine-Lieder," newly recorded on the CPO label, show an electric connection between word and music. Hans Werner Henze, who fled Germany for Italy in the fifties, maintains his independence from musical dogma. Wolfgang Rihm veers between the high-modernist and neo-Romantic camps, and, in his more generous moods, writes with real expressive force.

Totally different in orientation is Helmut Oehring, the composer of "Lethal Injection," "Suck the Brain Out of the Head," and "Do You Wanna Blow Job." At times earsplittingly cacophonous, at times charged with an astonishing rhythmic energy, Oehring's music communicates a kind of savage joy; one two-minute stretch in his piece "Self-Liberator" could go over big on the dance floor of the Roxy. Another German maverick is Heiner Goebbels, whose multimedia works run rampant over all available styles, literary sources, and theatrical techniques. This month, the Brooklyn Academy of Music is presenting a Goebbels piece entitled "Hashirigaki," which is described as a synthesis of Gertrude Stein's "The Making of Americans" and the Beach Boys' album "Pet Sounds."

The German scene will surely change in coming years, now that government and state subsidies for the arts are shrinking. Since the late forties, composers have sustained themselves on radio commissions, teaching assignments, festival appearances, and other institutional appointments. This arrangement goes back to the days of the American occupation, when, in the interest of detaching young composers from the Nazi past, the musical operatives of the Information Control Division—an outgrowth of General Robert McClure's Psychological Warfare Division—encouraged the propagation of what one internal memo described as "modern music of the international repertory." To this end, Darmstadt received in 1949 a grant of eight thousand Deutsche marks from American "reorientation" funds. Irony of ironies: the holy ground on which Adorno withstood the onslaught of mass culture was, in its own small way, part of the military-industrial complex.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, no impregnable high-culture fortresses remain. If composers are to survive, they must learn the art of compromise. They might bear in mind the instruction that Leopold Mozart gave to his son: every work should have in it something for the connoisseurs and something for the people. It is a simple, even naïve-sounding principle, yet an entire majestic tradition rests upon it. "Be embraced, you millions": the exultant shout of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony was, among other things, a statement of heated personal ambition.

One of the abiding myths of musical modernism is that the great masters were rejected by audiences of their time. The history behind these claims is specious—Bach won respect wherever he worked; Mozart thrived as much as he struggled; Beethoven became a living god—and the logic is inane: from the fact that great music was rejected it does not follow that rejected music is great. Certainly, a piece such as Beethoven's Quartet Opus 130, with its dissonant fugal finale, caused difficulties for its early listeners. "Incomprehensible, like Chinese," a critic said. The telling thing, however, is what Beethoven did in response to the criticism. He did not say, "Silence, retarded masses! This work displays the inherent tendency of the material and cannot be altered! Perhaps you will understand it in a hundred years; perhaps never. It is your problem." No, he took note of what a few aristocratic dilettantes had to say and wrote a new, lighter-toned finale to replace the Great Fugue. Beethoven, the god at the center of the musical pantheon, compromised.

Was this the tragedy of an unemancipated genius, as Schoenberg claimed? Or was it of a piece with the composer's greatness? As Lewis Lockwood notes, in a recent biography, Beethoven lavished care on his new finale, using it to create a quite different trajectory for the work. It was the last thing he ever wrote. Even though he was almost completely deaf, and had only a few months to live, Beethoven was listening to his audience. ♦

FICTION

ON THE STREETS

BY WILLIAM TREVOR

Arthurs ordered liver and peas and mashed potatoes in Strode Street. When it came, the liver didn't taste good. A skin of fat was beginning to congeal on the surface of the gravy where the potato hadn't soaked it up. The bright-green peas were more or less all right.

He was a dark-haired man in his mid-fifties, with a widow's peak and lean features that matched his spare frame, bony wrists protruding from frayed white cuffs. He wore a black suit, its black trousers being a requirement for a breakfast waiter, beneath a trim white jacket.

"You want a pot of tea with that?" the elderly woman who had brought him his plate of liver inquired. She came back to his table to ask him that, her only customer at this time in the afternoon.

Arthurs said yes. The woman wasn't a proper waitress; she didn't have a uniform, just a flowered overall folded over, tight on her stomach. Nearly seventy she'd be, he estimated, a woman who should be sitting by a fire somewhere, the heat bringing out crimson rings on her legs. He could sense her exhaustion, and wondered if she'd talk about it, if a conversation might develop.

"Finishing soon?" he said when she brought the tea, speaking as if he knew her well, his tone suggesting that there'd been a past in their relationship, which there had not.

"I go at three-thirty."

"Stop at home tonight, will you?"

"Eh?" She looked at Arthurs with something like alarm in her tired eyes. Her hair was dyed yellowish, dewlaps of fat rolled over her neck. Widowed, he imagined.

"Reckon I'll stop in myself," he said. "Best if you're feeling dull."

The woman answered none of that. He wondered if he should follow her when she finished for the day. It was twenty past three now and he'd be ready to go himself by half past. He broke the Garibaldi biscuit she'd brought with the tea. Since childhood he had followed people on the streets, to find out where they lived, to make a note of the address and add a few details that would remind him of the person. The compulsion was still insistent sometimes, but he could tell it wasn't going to be today.

SERGIO LARRAIN/MAGNUM

"There's the television of course," he said, "if you're feeling not up to much."

"No more 'n rubbish these times," the woman said.

"Sends you to an early bed, does it?" Further anxiety invaded the woman's eyes. Silent again, she stumped off.

A pound and a few pence the bill came to when she brought it, food cheaper here when the busy lunchtime hours had passed. He'd known it would be cheaper, Arthurs reminded himself.

Mr. Warkely came in and said don't start another batch or there'll be a clog-up in the dispatch room. So Cheryl turned the machine off and saw Mr. Warkely glancing at the clock and noting the time on his pad. Finishing a quarter of an hour early would naturally have to be taken into account at the end of the week.

The Warkelys' business was a small one, established three years ago in a basement, the retailing of scenic cards. Cheryl's task was to work the machine that encased in strong plastic wrapping each selection of six, together with the one that displayed in miniature the scenes the pack contained. It was part-time work, two hours three days a week; there was also, mornings only, the Safeway checkout, office cleaning evenings.

The Warkelys employed no one else: Mrs. Warkely attended to the accounts, the addressing of labels, and all correspondence; Mr. Warkely packed the packaged selections into cardboard boxes and drove a van with "WPW Greetings Cards" on it.

What was called the dispatch room was where television was watched, with the Warkelys' evening meal on two trays, evidence of their business stacked around the walls.

"See you Thursday," Cheryl said before she went, and Mrs. Warkely called out from somewhere and Mr. Warkely grunted because his ballpoint was in his mouth. "Thanks," Cheryl said, which was what she always said when she left the basement. She didn't know why she did, but somehow that expression of gratitude seemed to round off the couple of hours better than just saying goodbye.

She banged the door behind her and climbed the steps to the street, a thin, smallish woman, gray in her hair now, lines gathering around her eyes and lips. She had been pretty once and still retained more than a vestige of those looks at fifty-one. Shabby in a maroon coat that once she'd been delighted to own and now disliked, her high-heeled shoes uncomfortable, she hurried on the street. There was no reason to hurry. She knew there was not and yet she hurried, her way of walking it had become.

"You getting on all right?" The voice came from behind her, the question asked by the man she'd once been married to, and whom she'd thought of since as the error in her life. Always the same question it was when he was suddenly there on the street. She turned around.

"D'you want something?" She spoke sharply and he walked away at once, her tone causing offense. She knew it did: it was because it had happened often before. She had never told him what her hours at the Warkelys' were but he knew. He knew where her cleaning work was, he knew which Safeway it was. Five months the marriage had lasted, before she packed her belongings and went, giving up a full-time position in a Woolworth's, because she'd thought it better to move into another district.

She stood where he had left her, watching him in the distance until he turned a corner. "I don't think you should have married me," she'd said. It was more or less what Daph who shared her counter in Woolworth's had been remorselessly repeating ever since the marriage had taken place, not that she'd admitted to Daph that things weren't right.

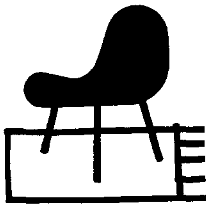
On the pavement she realized she was in the way of two elderly women who were trying to pass. "I'm sorry," she said, and the women said it didn't matter.

She walked on, more slowly than before. When they married she had moved upstairs to his two rooms, use of kitchen and bath, the rooms freshly painted by him in honor of the change in both their lives, old linoleum replaced by a carpet. The paint had still been fresh when she left, the carpet unstained; she'd never begun to call herself Mrs. Arthurs.

Later that afternoon, although he was not a drinking man, Arthurs entered a public house. Like the café in which he had earlier had a meal, it was not familiar to him: he liked new places.

He took the beer he ordered to a

corner of the almost empty saloon bar, where the fruit machines were at rest, the music speakers silent. There was a griminess about the place, a gloom that inadequate lighting did not dispel. At the bar, on barstools, two men sat morosely. A shirtsleeved barman turned the pages of the *Star*.



The dullness Arthurs had mentioned in the café possessed him entirely now, an infection it almost felt like, gathering and clinging to him, an unhealthy tepidness about it. He sipped the beer he'd ordered, wondering why he had come in here, wondering why he wasted money. Time was when he'd have gone to a racetrack, the dogs at Wimbledon or White City. In the crowd, with his mind on something else, he could have shaken off the mood. Or he might have rid himself of it by getting into conversation with a tart. Not that a tart had ever been much good, any more than the elderly waitress would have been. He closed his eyes, squeezing back disappointment at being asked if he wanted something when all he was doing was being friendly with her. They might have sat down somewhere, on a seat in a park, flower beds just beginning to be colorful, birds floating on the water. She knew how it had been; she knew he'd gone there at last, today. In their brief encounter, she had guessed.

People began to come into the saloon bar, another lone man, couples. Arthurs watched them, picking out the ones he immediately disliked. He wondered about phoning up Mastyn's and saying he wouldn't be in in the morning. A stomach upset, he'd say. But the hours would hang heavy, because he'd wake anyway at twenty past five, being programmed to it. And there'd be nothing to replace the walk to the Underground, and the Underground itself, and walking the last bit to the hotel; and nothing to replace the three and a half hours in the dining room until at half past ten he could hang up his white jacket and unhook his black bow tie. Since the hours of his employment at Mastyn's had been reduced, his earnings solely as a breakfast waiter were not enough to live on, but he made up the shortage in other ways. Since childhood he had stolen.

There was a telephone across the bar from where he sat, half obscured by a curtain drawn back from the entrance to the Ladies'. Noticing it, he was tempted again. But whoever answered at the Reception would grumble, would say leave it until the morning, see how he was then. The conversation would be unsatisfactory, any message he left for the dining room probably forgotten, and blame attached to him when he didn't turn up, even though he'd done what was required of him. None of that was worth it.

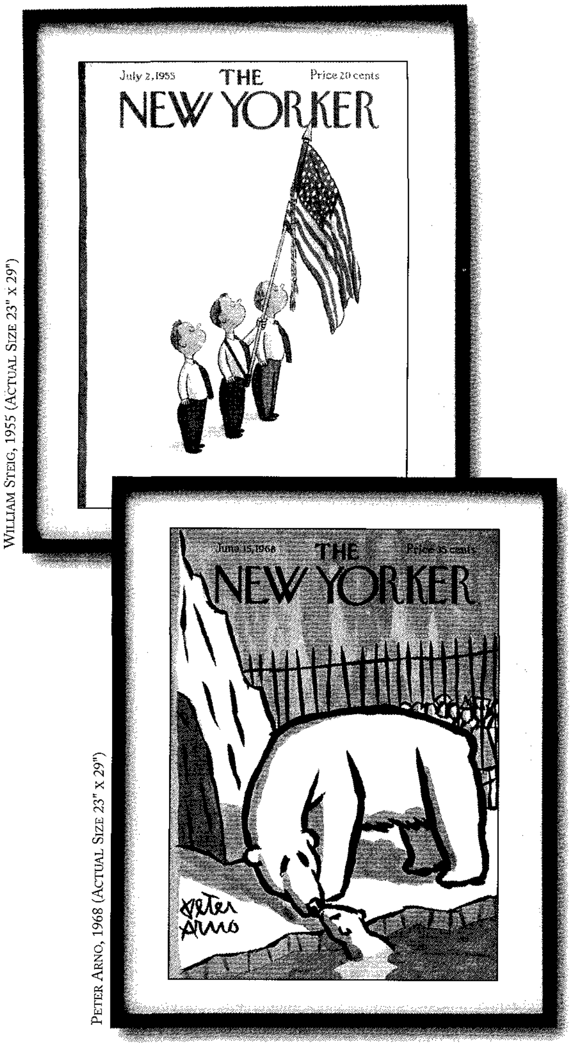
Why had she spoken to him like that? Why had her voice gone harsh, asking him if he wanted something? He had never asked her for money, not once, yet the way she'd spoken you'd think he'd been forever dropping hints. Music began, turned down low but noisy anyway because that was what it was, more a noise than anything else. The last couple who'd come in were noisy, too, laughter that could have been kept quieter. Both were wearing dark glasses, although there hadn't been sunshine all day. All he'd wanted to say was maybe they could go to a café for a few minutes. No more than that, ten minutes of her time.

Arthurs stared into the beer he hadn't drunk, at the scummy froth becoming nothing. The sympathy she could call upon was a depth in her, surprising in a woman who wasn't clever. He had been aware of it the first day on the stairs, when they'd got into conversation because he happened to be passing by. "You like a cup of tea or something?" she'd offered, her key already in the lock of the door; and he'd said tea, two sugars, when they were in her room. He told her about the lunchtime complaint in the dining room of Mastyn's because it was a natural thing to do; she said she'd wondered why he looked upset and then said anyone would be, a horrible thing to happen. He repeated the remarks that had been made, how he'd stood there having to listen, how the man had demanded the manager, then how he'd said, "We apologize for troubling you," when Mr. Simoni came over. Mr. Simoni had held his hand out but they hadn't taken it.

Arthurs wondered for a moment if, that first day or later, he'd told her this, too—that Mr. Simoni's outstretched hand had been ignored. He couldn't remember saying it. A dotted bow tie the man had been wearing, white dots on red, a chalk-striped shirt. The pepper had been ground over her risotto with a remark that sounded insolent, the woman said. The coffee had been cold. "Well, there'll certainly be no charge for the coffee" Mr. Simoni's immediate response was. Something special, this lunch should have been, the man said, and the woman called the lunch a misery before she threw her napkin down. They'd gone away, not knowing what they left behind. "Breakfasts only after this," Mr. Simoni murmured to him while bowing and scraping to the people at the other tables, who'd gone silent. "Take it or not." Beneath the thrown-down napkin Arthurs found a shopping list on a letter that had been half written and then abandoned, the shopping items pencilled on the space remaining. "Dear Sirs, An electric fire I purchased from you is faulty" had a jagged line drawn through it; there was a date in the same handwriting, and an address embossed in blue at the top of the single sheet.

Arthurs reached into an inside pocket and took from it this same writing paper, now folded to a quarter of its size. Frayed at the edges, it was dog-eared and soiled, one of the folds beginning to give way. He did not open it out for fear of damaging it further: it was enough to hold it for a moment between thumb and forefinger, to know that it was what he knew it was, kept by him always. A year ago, he'd gone into a Kall-Kwik and had had it photographed twice, nervous in case one day the original might somehow not be there: he did not trust, and never had, any time that was yet to come or what might happen in it. He knew the address by heart, even in his sleep, in dreams; but who could tell what might happen to memory? Not that it mattered now, of course.

He returned the folded paper to his pocket and stood up. Seven o'clock she finished in the offices; ten past she was out on the streets again. Five to six it was, and he sat for a little longer, thinking about her. For a long time before the day when she'd asked him into her room he'd seen her coming and going. They had passed often on the stairs of the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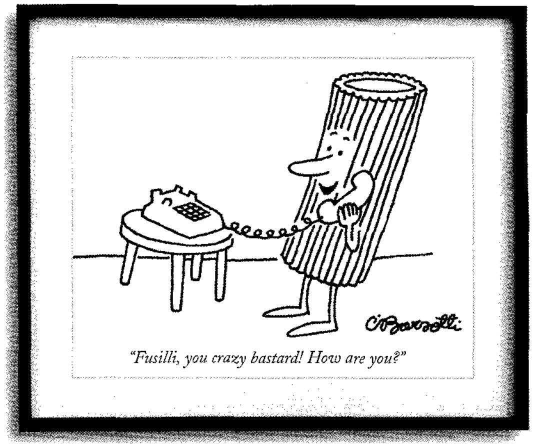
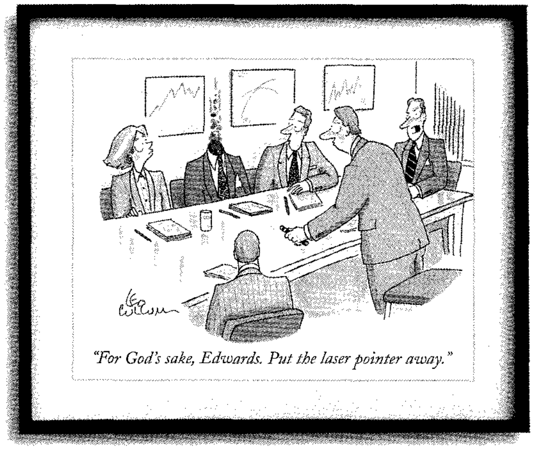


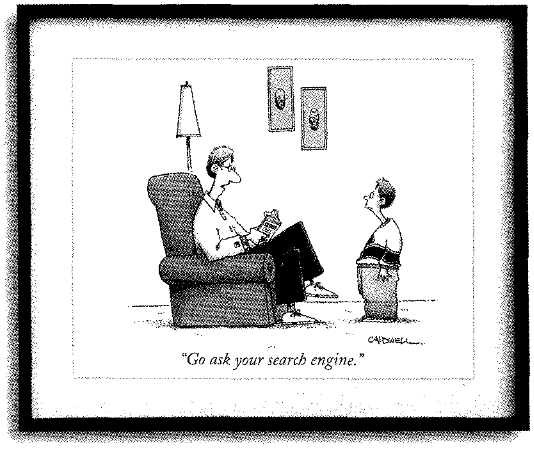
"Fusilli, you crazy bastard! How are you?"

CHARLES BARSOTTI, 1994 (ACTUAL SIZE 11" x 14")



"For God's sake, Edwards. Put the laser pointer away."

LEO CULLUM, 1999 (ACTUAL SIZE 11" x 14")



"Go ask your search engine."

JOHN CALDWELL, 2000 (ACTUAL SIZE 11" x 14")

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house where his own two rooms were a flight above hers, cheaper than the other rooms because of their bad state of repair. He hadn't known she was a widow, thinking ever since she'd come to the house a year or so ago she was unmarried. Apparently her husband had been a ticket man on the Underground.

He left his beer, pushing the glass away in case a sleeve caught it while he was putting his overcoat on. He buttoned the coat slowly—black like his suit—then crossed the saloon bar and stepped out into the darkening twilight. The folded paper was not something to keep, not anymore, but even so he knew he could not destroy it. There was that, too, to tell her: the shopping list would always be a memento.

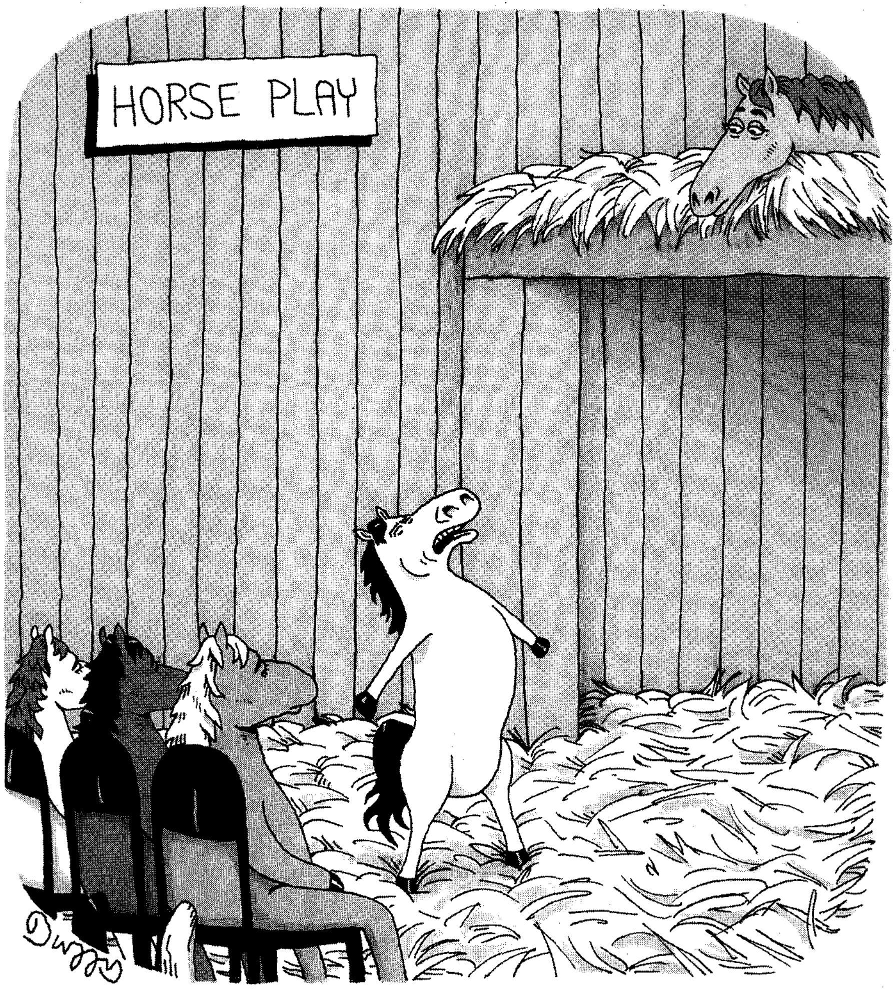
Her encounter with her ex-husband had not particularly upset Cheryl. She was too used to his sudden appearances for that. As she emptied wastepaper baskets and gathered up plastic cups, uncoiled the long flex of her vacuum cleaner and began on the floors, she yet again blamed herself. She had been foolish. Lonely, she supposed, missing what death had taken from her, she had seen the man differently; it had felt natural, saying yes. On their wedding day, Daph had been a witness in the register office, with a man they'd fetched in from the street. Afterward they'd sat with Daph in the back bar of the Queen's Regiment, and when a few people from the house turned up later they'd gone in a crowd to Bruce's Platter, above the Prudential Office. They'd kept calling her Mrs. Arthurs, making a joke of it once the wine got going, but all that time he was very quiet until she heard him telling Daph about the old lunchtime complaint, and every few minutes Daph—outspoken when she'd had a few too many—saying people like that didn't deserve a life. "You hear that?" he said afterward. "What your friend remarked?"

At the time it had seemed ordinary enough that he should mention the complaint to someone else, that that terrible lunchtime should nag so, the wound of humiliation slow to heal. She had urged him to leave Mastyn's, to find another post in a restaurant or another hotel, but for whatever reason he wouldn't, stoically maintaining that being a lowly breakfast waiter was what he would remain now. She didn't understand that, though she accepted that when you married someone you took on his baggage, and one day the healing would be complete.

But on the night of her second marriage the baggage she'd taken on was suddenly more complicated. When they returned from the celebrations in the Queen's Regiment and Bruce's Platter her husband of half a day didn't want to go to bed. He said it was hardly worth it, since he had to get up soon after five. But it was not yet eleven when he said that.

Still vacuuming the office floors, Cheryl remembered the unflurried timbre of his voice when he offered this explanation, a matter-of-factness that, quite suddenly, made her feel cold. She remembered turning on the single bar of the electric fire she had brought upstairs from the room she no longer occupied. She remembered lying awake, wondering if the darkness of the bedroom would draw him to her, wondering if he was a man like that. But nothing happened except what was happening in her mind, the realization that she had made a mistake.

As she slid her vacuum cleaner into corners and under desks, all that was there again, as often it was when, on the streets, her ex-husband once more attempted to enter her life. A man who was hurt was what he'd seemed to be during the time they had been getting to know one another. She'd told him about times in her childhood, about her marriage, and the shock of widowhood; he'd spoken of the censure he'd always felt himself subjected to, culminating in the lunchtime complaint he'd taken so hard. Small rebukes, reproof, blame in its different forms affected him, she was sure, more than ever was intended. From the first she had known that, when each new shade of his accumulated pain was revealed to her. Then, too, she had believed that the pain would ease, as it seemed to when she was with him. But



"Stella!"

even before she packed her things to go Daph said, "Your guy's nuts."

Cheryl turned the cleaner off and wound the flex back into place. She straightened the chairs she had had to move out of the way, finishing one office at a time and closing the door of each behind her. She took her coat and scarf from the hooks in the passage and carried downstairs the black plastic bag in which she'd collected the wastepaper. She reset the night alarm. She banged the door behind her and began to walk away.

"They ignored Mr. Simoni," he said in the empty dark. "Mr. Simoni tried to shake hands with them but he needn't have bothered."

She looked at him with nothing in her eyes. There was no flicker that they had been man and wife, as if she had forgotten. She had been everything to him; she could have sensed it from the way he'd been with her. When they had gone for a walk together, the second time they had, she'd put a hand on his arm. A Sunday that had been, a cold afternoon and she'd been wearing gloves, red and blue. Just a touch of pressure from her fingers, no more than that, nothing forward, but he'd felt the understanding there was. A waiter could tell you how people were, he had explained to her another time. She hadn't known it; she hadn't known how you could feel insulted, the amount people left beside a plate. Not that a breakfast waiter got anything at all.

"I don't want to stand here listening to you," she said, and then she said he should see someone; she said she had asked him to leave her alone.

"It's just I wondered if I'd ever told you that, how Mr. Simoni held out his hand."

"Please leave me alone," she said, walking on.

Every plea she made to him was a repetition, already stale before she made it, and sounding weary when she did. She had lost touch with Daph when she'd moved to another district but Daph had made her promise to go to the police if she became frightened.

"You could tell she was the kind of woman who complained," he said. He'd put the coffee ready for her to pour out, but when he walked away she called after him that it was cold. You didn't expect there'd be a waiter with soiled cuffs in this dining room, she said when Mr. Simoni came.

Cheryl tried not to see when he rooted in a pocket for his wallet. It was worst of all, the grubby paper taken from his wallet and carefully unfolded, its tattered edges and the blue letters of the address offered to her as a gift might be. "*Dear Sirs, An electric fire I purchased* . . ." In the dark she couldn't see but she knew the words were there, as the shopping list had been there, too, before its pencilled items had all but disappeared.

"Please leave me alone," she said.

Walking with her, he said the café by the launderette was always open, people waiting there for their washing to be ready. "Quiet," he said. "Never less than quiet, that café."

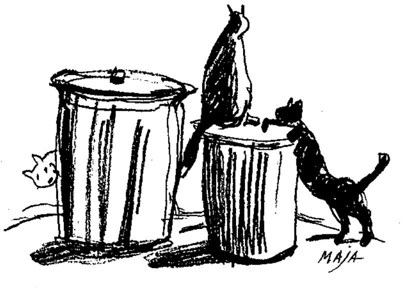
She could tell from his movements beside her that the paper was being folded again and then returned to the right compartment of his wallet. His wallet was small, black, its plastic coating worn away in places.

"It's hardly out of your way," he said.

They were alone on the street; they had been since she'd heard his voice behind her saying that the people who'd complained had ignored Mr. Simoni's wish to shake hands with them. He always spoke first from behind her on a street, his footsteps silent.

"I thought I might run into you today," he said. "She'll want to know about this morning, I thought."

He mentioned tea and she said she didn't want tea at this hour. And then she thought that in a café she could at last raise her voice, drawing attention to his harassing of her. But she didn't want to go to a café with him. When she'd found the small things he'd stolen he'd said nothing, not even shaking his head. When she'd packed her belongings he'd been silent, too, as if expecting nothing better, humiliation self-inflicted now.



"Straight after I'd done at the hotel I went out there," he said. "This morning."

He told her about the hotel people who'd had breakfast today, a slack morning, being a Monday. He remembered the orders; he always could afterward, even on a busy day, a waiter's skill, he called it. He told her about the bus he'd taken, out through Shepherd's Bush and Hammersmith and then the green of trees and grass beginning when Castelnau was left behind. Someone called out for the Red Rover pub and the driver shouted back that the Red Rover had gone years ago. There was a traffic holdup at Upper Richmond Road and he got off and walked a bit. He'd been out there before, he said: Priory Lane, then left by a letter box. A dozen times, he said, he'd checked it out.

They turned a corner and she could see the lit-up window of the launderette. She remembered the café he was talking about then, a little further along, with a 7Up sign in the window.

"I've something to get washed," he said.

She didn't go into the launderette with him. While he was there she could have hurried on, past the café, to where the buses ran. Any bus would have done, even one going in the wrong direction. But in the café, where an elderly man and two women on their own were the only customers, she carried from the counter a pot of tea and two glass cups and saucers, and then went back for milk.

She waited then, blankly staring at the cup of tea she'd poured, taking the first sip, tasting nothing. She did not feel she was in a café, only that she was alone, anywhere it could have been; and then her thoughts began again. She had been drawn to him once: that reminder echoed, hardly anything else made sense.

She watched him coming in from the launderette, the door slipping closed behind him. He looked about, knowing she would be there, knowing she wouldn't have disappeared.

On their table he laid out what he had taken from the pockets of his jacket before he'd put it into a washing machine: keys, his wallet, a ballpoint. He had thought she would ask about his jacket, where it was, why he wasn't wearing it, but she didn't. He stirred the tea she'd poured for him. It didn't matter that she didn't ask; his overcoat was open, she could see the jacket wasn't there.

"Three hours ago he'll have found her," he said. "A quarter past seven every evening he gets back to that house."

Cheryl stared at a cigarette burn on the table's surface while he told her. He had rung the bell, he said, and the woman hadn't recognized him when she opened the door. He'd said he'd come to read the meter, not saying which one. The gas man had been, no longer than a week ago, the woman had said, and he'd apologized for not having his badge on display. He'd pulled aside his overcoat to show the electricity badge on his left lapel. The woman hadn't closed the door when he walked into the hall. A good ten minutes it was open before his hands were free to close it.

"I blame myself," he said, "for being stupid like that."

He added that he didn't blame himself for anything else; he had stood there, not blaming himself, remembering the woman saying that his cuffs were grimy, complaining that the coffee was cold. He had stood there, hearing her voice, a vase of flowers he would have arranged on a table near the hall stand. Then he went to wash his hands in the downstairs lavatory, where coats and the man's hats and a cap hung on hooks. In the hall he draped a tissue over the Yale latch before he turned it; and afterward dropped the scrunched-up tissue into a wastebin on a lamppost.

Cheryl didn't say anything; she never did. She watched while his overcoat was buttoned again after she'd seen he wasn't wearing his jacket. A dribble of blood from the woman's mouth had got onto his sleeve, he said, the kind of thing that was discernible beneath a microscope, easy to overlook.

On one occasion he'd shown her a bruise he'd acquired on a finger while he was committing his crime; another time he'd shown her the tissue he had draped over the Yale, forgotten in his pocket all day. Once he'd said the second post had come, brown envelopes mostly, clattering through the letter box. While the woman was on the floor there'd been the postman's whistling and his footsteps going away.

"I didn't take a bus," he said. "I didn't want that, sitting on a bus. The first food I had afterward was liver and peas."

The last time it had been a packet of crisps; another time, a chicken burger. Still silent, Cheryl listened while his voice continued, while he explained that ever since this morning he'd felt she was his only friend, ever since he'd washed his hands, with the man's coats on coat hangers and the scented soap on its own special little porcelain shelf. A cat had jumped onto the windowsill outside and begun to mew, as if it knew what had occurred. He had thought of opening the back door to let it in, so that it would be in the hall when the man returned, and its bloody footsteps all over the house.

She had never told Daph that it wasn't fear she experienced when she was with him, that it wasn't even disquiet. She had never said she knew there was cunning in his parade of what hadn't happened, yet that it hardly seemed like cunning, so little did he ask of her. She had never said she knew it was her nature that had drawn her to go for walks with him and to accept his reticent embrace, that her pity was his nourishment. She had never wanted to talk to Daph about him. The Warkelys didn't know he existed.

He lifted the glass cup to his lips. She still did not speak. It was not necessary to speak, only to remain a little longer, the silence an element in being with him. He did not follow her when she walked away.

He would finish his tea and pour another cup: on the streets again she imagined that. In the launderette he would open the door of a machine and release his sodden jacket from where it clung to the drum. He would spread out the sleeves and pull the material back into shape before he began his journey to the rooms where so briefly they had lived together. He would not, tonight, be offended by the glare of neon beneath which she now walked herself. Nor by the cars that loitered in their search for what the night had to offer. Nor by the voices of the couples pressed close to one another as they went by. Her tears, tonight, allowed him peace. ♦

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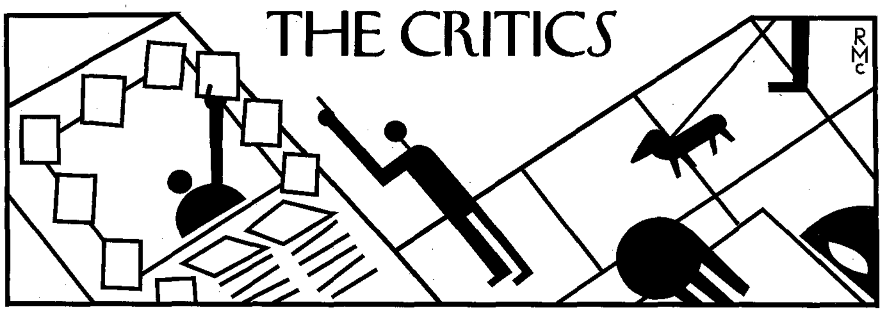


LIFE AND LETTERS

THE HISTORICAL ROMANCE

Edmund Wilson's adventure with Communism.

BY LOUIS MENAND

The idea for "To the Finland Station" came to Edmund Wilson while he was walking down a street in the East Fifties one day, in the depths of the Great Depression. Wilson was in his late thirties. He had established himself as a critic and reporter with the publication of "Axel's Castle," a study of modernist writers, in 1931, and "The American Jitters," a collection of pieces based on visits he made to mines and factories, in 1932. His ambition, though, was to write a novel. (An early effort, "I Thought of Daisy," had appeared in 1929; it was not a success.) So he was a little surprised to find himself contemplating an ambitious history of socialist and Communist thought, from the French Revolution to the Russian Revolution. But he plainly saw something novelistic in the subject. "I found myself excited by the challenge," he said later, "and there rang through my head the words of Dedalus at the end of Joyce's 'Portrait' "—"I go to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience and to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race." He took the title from a novel, Virginia Woolf's "To the Lighthouse."

Wilson had been witness to the condition of workers in Appalachia and Detroit—after bringing relief supplies to striking miners in Pineville, Kentucky, he was run out of town by the local authorities—and although he was suspicious of the Communist Party, he welcomed the Crash as a portent of the death of capitalism, and he embraced Marxism. He voted for the Communist candidate, William Z. Foster, in the 1932 Presidential election; the same year, he signed a manifesto calling for "a temporary dictatorship of the class-conscious workers." He was never a Communist, but he did believe that only the Communists were genuinely trying to help the working class. In 1935, after he began work on "To the Finland Station," he tried to persuade his friend John Dos Passos, whose radicalism had begun to cool, that Stalin was a true Marxist, "working for socialism in Russia."

Soon afterward, Wilson went to Russia himself. He published his journal of the visit, along with material about travels in the United States, in a book pointedly entitled "Travels in Two Democracies." In fact, he had had to censor his diaries in order to conceal evidence of the fear and oppression he had seen in the Soviet Union. By 1938, he had stopped pretending. "They haven't even the beginnings of democratic institutions; but they are actually worse off in that respect than when they started," he confessed to a friend. "They have totalitarian domination by a political machine." He understood the implications for the book he was writing. In October, 1939, he sadly informed Louise Bogan, "I am about to try to wind up the Finland Station (now that the Soviets are about to annex Finland)."

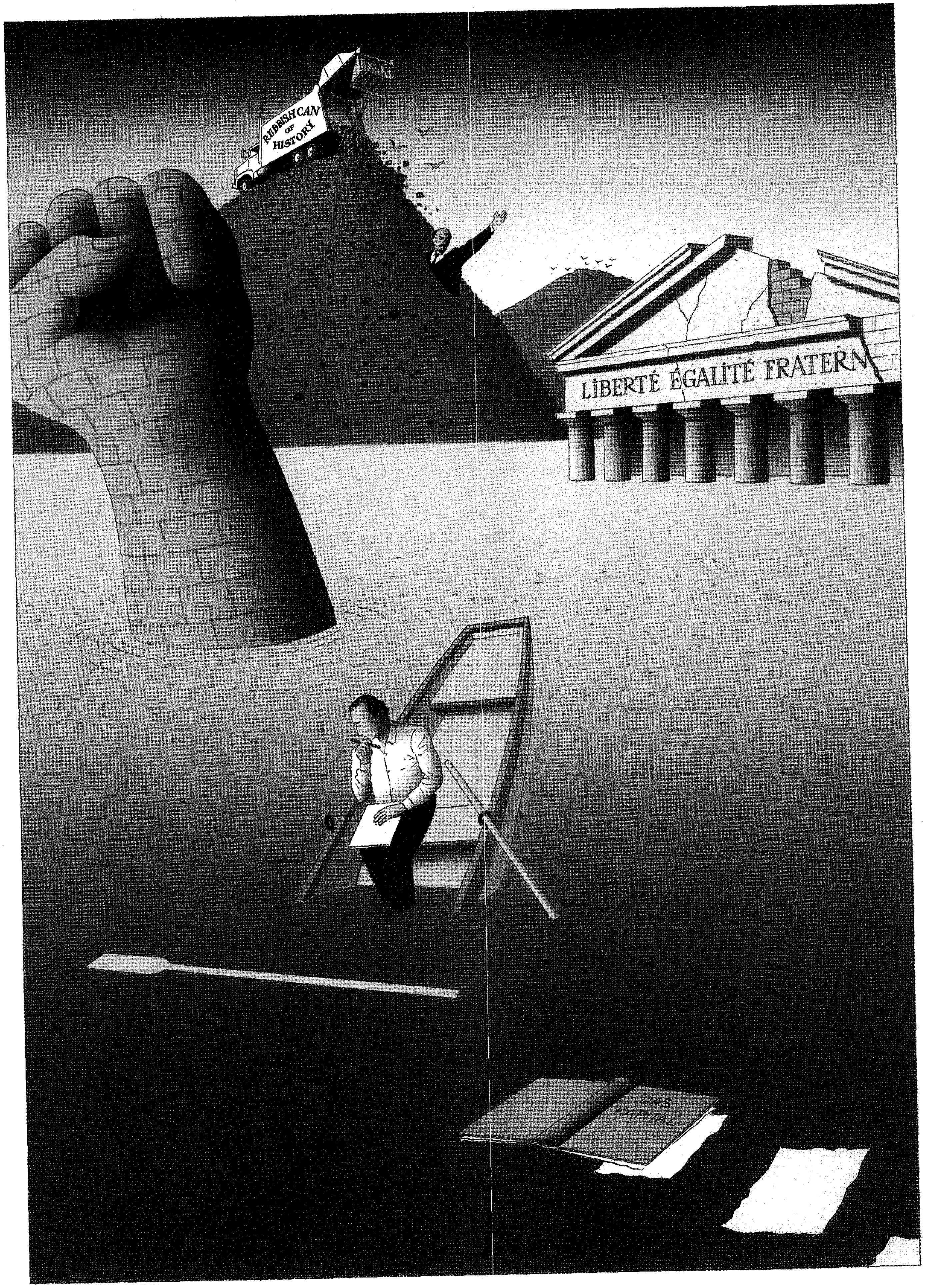
"To the Finland Station" was published by Harcourt Brace in September, 1940. It was not the best moment for a book whose hero is Vladimir Lenin. A month earlier, in Mexico, Leon Trotsky had had his head split open with an ice axe. A year before that, the Soviet Union had signed a non-aggression pact with Nazi Germany, effectively allowing Hitler to invade Poland. For five years before that, Stalin had systematically liquidated political opposition within the Soviet Union. The purges were preceded by a program of collectivization that led to the death of more than five million people. By 1940, disillusionment with Communism was well established among intellectuals in the West. André Gide, George Orwell, and Dos Passos had written firsthand accounts of the brutality and hypocrisy of contemporary Communism—Gide and Dos Passos after visits to Russia, Orwell after fighting for the Loyalists in Spain. *Partisan Review* had already become the organ of the anti-Communist left.

By January, 1947, "To the Finland Station" had sold only 4,527 copies. Doubleday took over the rights and reprinted it that year, but sales continued to be slow. The book did not begin to attract readers until it came out in paperback, as one of the first Anchors, in 1953. It sold decently in the nineteen-sixties, and in 1972, the last year of Wilson's life, Farrar, Straus & Giroux published a new edition with an introduction by Wilson reassessing his interpretation of Soviet Communism. "This book of mine," he explains, "assumes throughout that an important step in progress has been made, that a fundamental 'breakthrough' had occurred, that nothing in our human history would ever be the same again. I had no premonition that the Soviet Union was to become one of the most hideous tyrannies that the world had ever known, and Stalin the most cruel and unscrupulous of the merciless Russian tsars. This book should therefore be read as a basically reliable account of what the revolutionists thought they were doing in the interests of 'a better world.' "

This didn't entirely meet the difficulty. Wilson did know what was going on in the Soviet Union in the nineteen-thirties, as his pages on Stalin in "To the Finland Station" make clear. The problem wasn't with Stalin; the problem was with Lenin,

GUY BILLOUT

The historian clings to the bits that have floated to the surface, while the wreck of the past sinks out of sight.



RUBBISH CAN OF HISTORY
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the book's ideal type of the intellectual as man of action. Wilson admitted that he had relied on publications controlled by the Party for his portrait of Lenin. (Critical accounts were available; for example, the English translation of the émigré Mark Landau-Aldanov's "Lenin" was published, by Dutton, in 1922.) Lenin could create an impression of selfless humanitarianism; he was also a savage and ruthless politician—a "pail of milk of human kindness with a dead rat at the bottom," as Vladimir Nabokov put it to Wilson in 1940, after reading "To the Finland Station." In the introduction to the 1972 edition, Wilson provided a look at the rat. He did not go on to explain in that introduction that the most notorious features of Stalin's regime—the use of terror, the show trials, and the concentration camps—had all been inaugurated by Lenin. "To the Finland Station" begins with Napoleon's betrayal of the principles of the French Revolution; it should have ended with Lenin's betrayal of European socialism. Wilson believed that he was writing about the success of ideas in action, about the translation (in the spirit of Stephen Dedalus) of the imagined into the real. But the story he chose was a story of failure.

OCCUPATION

The prostitutes in Kabul tap their feet
beneath their faded burkas in the heat.
For bread or fifteen cents, they'll take a man to bed—
their husbands dead, their seven kids unfed—
and thanks to occupation, rents have risen twentyfold,
their chickens, pots, and carpets have been sold
and women's flesh now worth its weight in tin.
Two years ago, the Talibs favored boys and left the girls alone.
A woman then was worth her weight in stone.

—*Eliza Griswold*

And yet "To the Finland Station" is, if not a great book, a grand book. It brings a vanished world to life. When you undertake historical research, two truths that sounded banal come to seem profound. The first is that your knowledge of the past—apart from, occasionally, a limited visual record and the odd unreliable survivor—comes entirely from written documents. You are almost completely cut off, by a wall of print, from the life you have set out to represent. You can't observe historical events; you can't question historical actors; you can't even know most of what has not been written about. What has been written about therefore takes on an importance that may be spurious. A few lines in a memoir, a snatch of recorded conversation, a letter fortuitously preserved, an event noted in a diary: all become luminous with significance—even though they are merely the bits that have floated to the surface. The historian clings to them, while, somewhere below, the huge submerged wreck of the past sinks silently out of sight.

The second realization that strikes you is, in a way, the opposite of the first: the more material you dredge up, the more elusive the subject becomes. In the case of a historical figure, there is usually a standard biographical interpretation, constructed around a small number of details: diary entries, letters, anecdotes, passages in the published work that everyone has decided must be autobiographical. Out of these details a profile is constructed, which, in the circular process that characterizes most biographical enterprise, is then used to interpret the details. Yet it is almost always possible to find details that are inconsistent with the standard interpretation, or that seem to point to a different interpretation, or that don't support any coherent interpretation. Usually, there's a level of detail below that, and on and on. One instinct you need in doing historical research is knowing when to keep dredging stuff up; another is knowing when to stop.

You stop when you feel that you've got it. The test for a successful history is the same as the test for any successful narrative: integrity in motion. It's not the facts, snapshots of the past, that make a history; it's the story, the facts run by the eye at the correct speed. Novelists sometimes say that they invent a character, put the character into a situation, and then wait to see what the character will do. The historian's character has to do what the real person has done, but there is an uncanny way in which this can seem to happen almost spontaneously. The "Marx" that the historian has imagined keeps behaving, in every new set of conditions, like Marx. This gives the description of the conditions a plausibility as well. The person fits the time; the world turns beneath the character's marching feet. The past reveals itself to have a plot.

This may seem a fanciful account of the way history is written. It is not a fanciful account of the way history is read, though. Readers expect an illusion of continuity, and once the illusion locks in, they credit the historian with having brought the past to life. Nothing else matters as much, and it is hard to see how the reader could have this experience if the historian had not had it first. The intuition of the whole precedes the accumulation of the parts. There is no other way, really, for the mind to work.

This is why historical research is an empirical enterprise and history writing an imaginative one. We read histories for information, but what is it that we want the information for? The answer is a little paradoxical: we want the information in order to acquire the ability to understand the information. At some point, we need the shell of facts to burst, and to feel that we are inside the moment. "Tell me about yourself," says a stranger at a party. You can recite your résumé, but what you really want to express, and what the stranger (assuming her interest is genuine) really wants to know, is what it is like to be you. You wish (assuming that your interest is genuine) that you could just open up your mind and let her look in. Information alone doesn't do it. A single intuition of what it was like to be Marx, or Proust, or Gertrude Stein, or the ordinary man on the late-modern street, how they thought and how the world looked to them, is worth a thousand facts, for when we are equipped with the intuition every fact becomes sensible. A residual positivism makes fact and intuition seem to be antithetical terms: hard knowledge versus subjective empathy. This has the priorities backward. Intuitive knowledge—the sense of what life was like when we were not there to experience it—is precisely the knowledge we seek. It is the true positive of historical work.

Wilson had a gift for getting inside the writers he liked (though he had no gift at all for getting inside the writers he didn't like). Getting inside a historical moment was more difficult. In "Axel's Castle," he attempted to create a narrative about modern literature; in "Patriotic Gore," he attempted to create one about the United States during the Civil War and its aftermath. Neither book successfully transcends its parts. This was because Wilson had a journalist's queasiness about big ideas. Abstraction is the reporter's natural enemy, and Wilson favored nice, low-concept metaphors: the pendulum theory of literary history, in "Axel's Castle" (realism swings to symbolism, and back); the wound theory of artistic creation, in "The Wound and the Bow" (art as compensation for psychic pain); the sea-slug theory of history, in "Patriotic Gore" (the Civil War as a case of the universal tendency of the larger entity to consume the smaller). These are premises that kill contexts; they reduce everything to a single-term explanation. Wilson could get inside Proust and Joyce, in "Axel's Castle," and inside Abraham Lincoln and Oliver Wendell Holmes, in "Patriotic Gore"; but those books read more like a series of portraits than like a narrative.

"To the Finland Station" is different. The structure is simple: the decline of the bourgeois revolutionary tradition after the French Revolution, as Wilson sees it reflected in the writings of Jules Michelet, Ernest Renan, Hippolyte Taine, and Anatole France; the emergence of revolutionary socialism, seen through the writings of Saint-Simon, the communitarians Charles Fourier and Robert Owen, and Marx and Engels; the triumph of Communism, illustrated by the careers of Lenin and Trotsky. There are things Wilson minimized that would have complicated this narrative: the persistence of a non-Communist socialist ideal in Western Europe; the liberal tradition in Russian politics (to which Nabokov's father belonged); the success and failure of the Mensheviks, of whom Wilson did not make much. And, of course, if the book were being written now, the vicious side of Marxist and Leninist thought, mostly a subtext in Wilson's account, would guide the narrative, and the story would touch down in Siberia or Berlin rather than at the Finland Station.

But we don't read "To the Finland Station" as a book about the Russian Revolution anymore. What draws us now is the subtitle: "A Study in the Writing and Acting of History." History is the true subject of Wilson's book, and what he evokes is what it felt like to believe—as Vico and Michelet, Fourier and Saint-Simon, Hegel and Marx, Lenin and Trotsky all believed—that history holds the key to the meaning of life. The evocation is successful because when Wilson began writing "To the Finland Station" he believed in history, too. He thought that history had a design, and that the Depression was an event fully comprehensible within the context of that design: it was the long-predicted collapse of the capitalist order. "To the Finland Station" is valuable as a window on the nineteenth century, but it is also a poignant artifact of the nineteen-thirties, a time when many people thought that history was something you could get on the right side or the wrong side of. It was an idea indistinguishable from faith, and Marx was one of its prophets.

Marx was a man of the eighteen-forties—like Dostoyevsky, Herzen, Bakunin, Baudelaire, Flaubert, Wagner, and Mazzini. All of them were shaped by the promise and the collapse of the European revolutions of 1848. They had dreamed that the world was about to turn a corner, a corner it had tried to turn once before, at the time of the French Revolution, and that nothing would ever be the same; and when they awoke the old order was still there—in many ways more reactionary and more philistine than ever. This is the story that Flaubert told in "Sentimental Education," and it is what Marx was referring to in the famous phrase in "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte": "the first time as tragedy, the second as farce."

In the decades that followed the failure of the 1848 revolutions, the North Atlantic states underwent an industrial and technological growth spurt that completed the process of modernization and established capitalism as a complete social and economic system. Capital became the great solvent in everyday life; change was the new constant. This was the world of which Marx aspired to be the champion analyst. "Uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation" was the way he described it. The words were written on the eve of the 1848 revolutions. They are, of course, from "The Communist Manifesto": "All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses, his real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind."

Marxism was a consolation for this condition. It said that, wittingly or not, the individual performs a role in a drama that has a shape and a goal, a trajectory, and that modernity will turn out to be just one of the acts in that drama. Change is not arbitrary. It is produced by class conflict; it is faithful to an inner logic; it points toward an end, which is the establishment of the classless society. Marxism was founded on an appeal for social justice, but there were many forms that such an appeal might have taken. Its deeper attraction was the discovery of a meaning, in which human beings might participate, in history itself.

The thinker standing behind the Marxian idea of history was Hegel, and Hegel gave Wilson the most trouble in writing his book. "My great handicap, I find, in dealing with all this is my lack of grounding in German philosophy," he confessed to his old Princeton teacher Christian Gauss in 1937. "Dialectical materialism, which was in revolt against the German idealistic tradition, really comes right out of it; and you would have to know everybody from Kant down to give a really sound account of it. I have never done anything with German philosophy, and can't bear it, and am having a hard time now propping that part of my story up." He never did get it figured out.

The dialectic was just the sort of high-theory concept that Wilson reflexively avoided. At the same time, he was not a man quick to concede his ignorance, and he devoted a chapter of his book to explaining that the dialectic is basically a religious myth (a characteristic exercise in journalistic debunking). Wilson had no idea what he was talking about. The two-paragraph explanation he gives of the term at the beginning of the chapter on "The Myth of the Dialectic"—the thesis-antithesis-synthesis model—is not the dialectic of Hegel. It is the dialectic of Fichte. And Marx and Engels did not name their method "dialectical materialism." That was a term assigned to it by Georgi Plekhanov, the man who, after Marx's death, introduced Marxism to Russia. Engels referred to the method as historical materialism.

Still, Hegel's dialectic was part of Marx's way of doing philosophy, and the use of the dialectic as a historical method is the strongest element in Marxist theory. In the broadest terms, it is a way of treating each aspect of a historical moment—its art, its industry, its politics—as being implicated in the whole, and of understanding that every dominant idea depends on, defines itself against, whatever it suppresses or excludes. Dialectical thinking is a brake on the tendency to assume that things will continue to be the way they are, only more so, because it reminds us that every paradigm contains the seed of its own undoing, the limit-case that, as it is approached, begins to unravel the whole construct. You don't have to be an enemy of bourgeois capitalism, or believe in an iron law of history, to think this way. It's just a fruitful method for historical criticism.

Wilson was not drawn to dialectical thinking—he mocks "the Dialectic" in nearly all his writings on Marxism—in part because thinking dialectically is something that American intellectuals don't naturally do. John Dewey was one of the few who did, and Dewey was trained as a Hegelian. American critics tend to prefer a binary analysis: thumbs up or thumbs down, right or left, tonic or toxin. It is difficult for them to see that most cultural products work in several ways at once. It is even harder for them to see that each element in a cultural system depends for its value on all the others—so that to alter one element is to alter every element. Their overpowering impulse is, like Wilson's, to isolate and to simplify. "To the Finland Station" stands out from the rest of Wilson's work because it succeeds in representing history as a reciprocal interaction between individual agency and social force. And, whatever Wilson's hopes and intentions, it does expose in Marxism the seeds of its own undoing.

What is most characteristic in American criticism is something that Wilson had plenty of. He was a literalist and a skeptic. He believed, when he started his book, that Marx and Engels were the *philosophes* of a second Enlightenment. The notion appealed to him because he himself was, in many respects, a man of the eighteenth century (and liked to say so in later life). The pose of seeing through other people's fancy phrases was part of this persona. Empiricism and common sense—Hume and Johnson, the reporter and the critic—were all the philosophy that Wilson required. What he most admired about Marxism was the practical side: people were suffering under the conditions of industrial capitalism, and something needed to be done for them. He thought of the theory as simply an interesting example of the use of ideas as a spur to action.

By the time Wilson came to the end of his book, though, he had become wary of the idealization of history that he saw as endemic to Marxism. He describes this as the notion that history "is a being with a definite point of view in any given period. It has a morality which admits of no appeal. . . . Knowing this—knowing, that is, that we are *right*—we may allow ourselves to exaggerate and simplify." After describing Trotsky's speech to the Mensheviks following the Bolshevik seizure of power—"You are pitiful isolated individuals. . . . You are bankrupt; your role is played out. Go where you belong from now on, the rubbish-can of history!"—Wilson observes, mildly:

> There sometimes turn out to be valuable objects cast away in the rubbish-can of history—things that have to be retrieved later on. From the point of view of the Stalinist Soviet Union, that is where Trotsky himself is today; and he might well discard his earlier assumption that an isolated individual needs must be "pitiful" for the conviction of Dr. Stockman in Ibsen's *Enemy of the People* that "the strongest man is he who stands most alone."

This grim independence was something Wilson admired in Marx, and something he might have wished to feel true, with some justice, of himself.

The more one thinks about Wilson's headstrong character and his antipathy to systematic thought, the more remarkable his devotion of so many years of his life to this book—which required him to learn both German and Russian. Possibly it can be explained by saying that, in the end, Wilson was a writer, and he thought he had found a good story. The stubbornness and independence also help to explain why, unlike most American intellectuals of his generation, Wilson did not rebel against the politics of his youth. He renounced Communism and the Soviet Union, but he did not become an anti-Communist crusader. One of his later books, "The Cold War and the Income Tax," was an attack on anti-Communism and American foreign policy, and a book so intemperate that it was received as virtually anti-American. Around the same time Wilson published it, he set out to create an "American Pléiade"—the project that has now been realized as the Library of America. He chose to be a patriot on his own terms.

Among other surprising things, "The Cold War and the Income Tax" disclosed how little money Wilson had made from his writing. His sense of vocation was too urgent for him to calculate the impression he might be creating. In the last decades of his life, he shuttled between Wellfleet, on Cape Cod, and Talcottville, in upstate New York, indifferent to almost everything but his story of the moment: Russian writers, the literature of the Civil War, the Dead Sea Scrolls. He resembled the great isolatoes he had brought to life in the pages of "To the Finland Station," Michelet, Babeuf, Saint-Simon—above all, Marx himself, writing ceaselessly, his books selling few copies, his wife ill, his children crawling all over him, the rent collector at the door, and his inner gaze fixed raptly on history, the courtesan of every ideology. ♦

BOOKS

STONE OF THE HEART

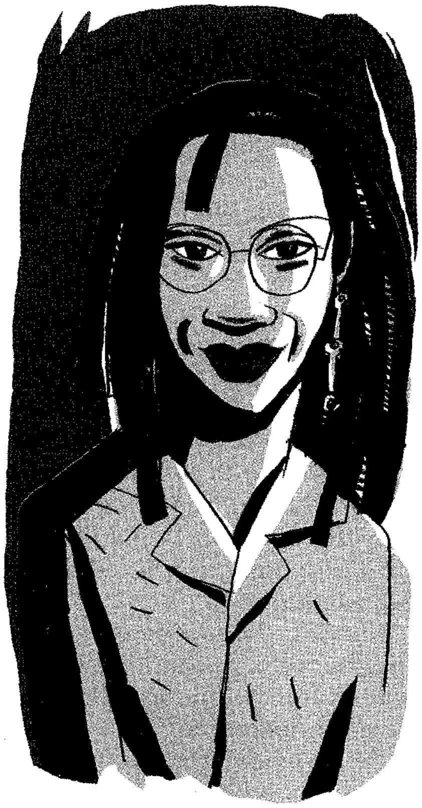
A novel of love and war in Zimbabwe.

BY EDNA O'BRIEN

In 1929, Virginia Woolf delivered a passionate polemic about the odds facing a woman born with a great gift for writing. She suggested that in the preceding centuries such a person would have become crazed, shot herself, or been stigmatized as a witch. She imagined the case of Shakespeare's hypothetical sister, in whom genius lay dormant and mute, who died young, and was buried ingloriously at a crossroads near the Elephant and Castle, where omnibuses trundled past. If Woolf were speaking to us now, she would surely voice indignation at the fate of Amina Lawal, the adulterous Nigerian woman whom an Islamic court has ordered to be executed once she ceases to breast-feed her baby. Sharia law prescribes that the culprit be buried in sand up to the neck and stoned to death. An added nicety in certain instances is the stipulation that the stones be large enough to cause pain but not so large as to kill the condemned immediately. The case has drawn a flood of outrage, curiosity, sympathy, and prurience. The young woman, heavy-lidded and inscrutable, gazes out at us from newspapers, expressing her poignant belief that "no man can do me harm without God's permission." Yet her oppressors invoke God, too, and, upon hearing the sentence, shouted, "God is great." God may have many mansions, as we are told in Scripture, but He also needs many personae if He is to fulfill the needs of His more rabid adherents. The President of Nigeria has said that he will weep if Lawal is killed, but so far his government has done nothing concrete to overturn the verdict. St. Paul's dictum "Flee fornication" has taken on a political and global dimension.

Yvonne Vera is a Zimbabwean writer in her late thirties, whose previous work has confronted the bitter hardships of her countrywomen, embroiled by the political and judicial turmoil of the past sixty years. Her new novel is called "The Stone Virgins" (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $18), prompting us to speculate whether experience has transmogrified her virgins into stone or whether they must be stone to endure their fates—validating Yeats's sentiment that "Too long a sacrifice / Can make a stone of the heart."

Zimbabwe has passed through several upheavals since its independence from Britain, in 1980. Its leader, Robert Mugabe—who was once hailed as Africa's Clement Attlee, and at whose independence celebrations Bob Marley performed—is now a lonely, isolated, and irrational despot. Soon after independence, guerrilla war erupted in the province of Matebaland, as Mugabe attempted to wipe out the Zapu party of his rival Joshua Nkomo and establish one-party rule. This war was so hidden and so violent that estimates of the death toll vary widely.



Yvonne Vera

Yvonne Vera comes from this ravaged region and, not surprisingly, "The Stone Virgins" is a story of war, ceasefire, and more war. It depicts the rape of the country—first by its colonial oppressors and then by its own people—counterpointed with the rape of two sisters, Thenjiwe and Nonceba. The novel opens with drowsy, opiate languor in the city of Bulawayo, with its flamboyant trees, blistering red blooms, and dizzying scent of jacaranda, where side streets named after English poets—Kipling, Tennyson, Byron, Keats, and Coleridge—testify to the colonial heritage. Yet, as Vera warns us, despite this lushness, "in this universe knives emerge as suddenly as lightning." There is a pervasive sense of waiting—waiting for a telephone to be repaired, waiting for tins of condensed milk to appear on the shelves of the one store, waiting for work on a road to be resumed, and, far more ominously, waiting for a war to start or to end.

We leave that city for the edge of the bush, the lands of Gulati—of the ancient Matopo Hills and the rural enclave of Kezi—and the locale of future massacres. The bustle of Kezi centers on a store where people wait for the Shoeshine bus to come from the city, bringing passengers, newspapers, mattresses, tables, chairs, blankets, sacks of maize; women wait for letters from husbands or lovers, for parcels with nylons and deodorant and Ponds cold cream. Outside the store, people sit on empty crates, idling as though they had a lifetime to consider what their new independence is all about.

It is here that Thenjiwe attracts the attention of Cephas Dube, a man who has taken the bus from Bulawayo merely to see the hills of Gulati, intending to return that same evening. Thenjiwe, lips "ripe and forgiving," a swing in her walk, basks in the stranger's amused gaze. Yet the couple's radiant sensuality cannot altogether bury the fear in their psyches. They become intimates, and yet they are strangers. He sleeps with his eyes open and thrashes about in nightmare. Before he leaves, he brings milk in a horn and anoints her body with it as a farewell. The brief idyll of love is over.

The smell of war begins to emanate from people's skin, although outside the store soldiers from the previous conflict—men and women, still in their

JACQUES DE LOUSTAL

camouflage and heavy boots—drink Fanta and listen to soccer on the portable radio. Wounded beings with an acute desire for simple diversions that they fear will be brief, they have all succumbed to a kind of amnesia. It is 1981. The state of emergency begins; a curfew is declared. "Every road out of Bulawayo is covered with soldiers and police, teeming like ants," Vera writes.

As the region becomes the setting for countless massacres, the reader is drawn into a terrifying inferno. The effect is like looking at a dark canvas and trying to identify the shadowy figures. Nonceba, Thenjiwe's younger sister, is trapped in a hut by Sibaso, a dissident dehumanized by the bush war—a stalker, killer, rapist—"a hunter who kills not because he is hungry but because his stomach is full." His mind is jagged, darting, contradictory; violating her, he asks if she is afraid to look at him. He tells her stories. He relishes the tale of the she-spider, which can be seen only in moonlight, hanging from a tree, a spider that, when mating, devours the male, then moves on to the next bacchanalia. Sibaso has eaten such creatures, he has lived in caves, in bomb craters, in wombs of horror among the charred dead. He may seem like a normal man, in his blue shirt, frayed khaki trousers, and shoes, but these are a disguise, because "a war makes people into lifeless beings." Outside, Thenjiwe lies dead, decapitated by Sibaso. The murderer enacts a freak dance with the corpse and then vanishes.

Nonceba ends up strapped down on a hospital bed, her mouth bandaged, because, as a farewell memento, her paramour has sliced off her lips. In her delirium, she recalls Thenjiwe as she once was—young, joyous, bringing the big white flowers with double blooms from the riverbank, after the rainfall. A man visits her bedside, but neither of them speaks. It is Cephas Dube, Thenjiwe's lover, who has read of the atrocity and has come to offer some form of deliverance. Eventually, she moves to the city with this stranger, finds a job, and staggers on, bringing to mind the numbed stoicism of Beckett's character in "The Unnameable," who can't go on but who must go on.

This is a strong, haunting story. The zest and innocence of the two girls, random casualties of war, provide its unifying pulse, while Sibaso remains a phantom—more a personification of evil than a full-fledged character. Vera loves language and sometimes immerses herself and us in it to the point where emotional impact, the raw moment of terror, is blurred or lessened. She gives the reader a feast of sensations when what is required is the pivotal confrontation of drama. The rape proceeds with a trancelike ambiguity, an overwhelming phantasmagoria in which both our sympathy and our revulsion are withheld:

> He tears the sleeve off her dress and it falls to her elbow, hanging uselessly; white threads dangle from her shoulder.
>
> He waits, patient as an entire season, as disobedience, as a thief. He can see the shape of her disbelief. He owns her like a memory. He is the type to own the intangible—hallucinations, fragrances, death. So, though she breathes deeply, it is with a stillness that he owns, with a hope he has banished. He commands. She dares not contradict him.

Not every scene is so labyrinthine. Nonceba's journey to the hospital with her aunt Sihle—roadblocks everywhere, the older woman willing her to live—is clear and deft. The economy of the description makes the danger all the more palpable.

"The Stone Virgins," like many novels from the killing fields, poses a dilemma for contemporary novelists and dramatists, confronted as they are with reportage remarkable for its probity and eloquence. Beside it, many novels can seem saturate with narcissism and private angst. So why do we turn to literature? We read it, I suppose, for the longer haul, for the imaginative reaches and ability to render the intricate and confounding passions of men and women—graphic, unimpeded, and incandescent. In Kezi, when the storekeeper is about to be burned alive for crimes and betrayals that he has not committed, he experiences a sudden epiphany about the random brutality of war. He knows that there is no recourse, and his mind races beyond the ceasefire, the celebrations, the expectations, the disenchantments, and even past his own death as the soldiers string him up, "until his mind was no longer whirling and turning, but empty." His is the moral voice, through which comes the grim realization that ordinary human beings become pawns to fulfill the destiny of power-mad, pseudo-messianic leaders. ♦

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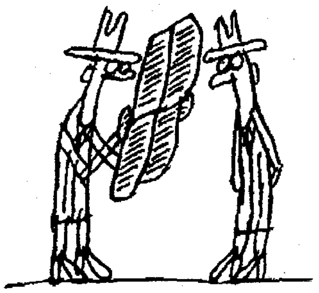
BRIEFLY NOTED

Pushing Time Away, *by Peter Singer (Ecco; $24.95).* David Oppenheim was a classical scholar, a member of Freud's inner circle, and a close friend of the psychoanalyst Alfred Adler. He was also a victim of the Holocaust, and until his grandson, the philosopher Peter Singer, discovered a trove of his letters and writings, his life had been almost completely forgotten. Singer reconstructs that life in fascinating detail. He illuminates the complexities of his grandparents' difficult but successful marriage, evokes the vibrant and disputatious life of early-twentieth-century Vienna, and offers a convincing picture of the intellectual and personal battles that dominated the early days of psychoanalysis. Singer's moving book, haunted from the beginning by its terrible end, constitutes a revolt against the anonymity of the Holocaust's grim statistics.

Jarhead, *by Anthony Swofford (Scribner; $24).* In 1990, Swofford, a young Marine sniper, went to Saudi Arabia with dreams of vaporizing Iraqi skulls into clouds of "pink mist." As he recounts in this aggressively uninspiring Gulf War memoir, his youthful bloodlust was never satisfied. After spending months cleaning sand out of his rifle—so feverish with murderous anticipation that he almost blows a buddy's head off after an argument—Swofford ends up merely a spectator of a lopsided battle waged with bombs, not bullets. The rage the soldiers feel, their hopes of combat frustrated, is "nearly unendurable." Swofford's attempts at brutal honesty sometimes seem cartoonish: "Rape them all, kill them all" is how he sums up his military ethic. He is better at comic descriptions—gas masks malfunctioning in the desert heat, camels picked off during target practice—that capture the stupid side of a smart-bomb war.



W. C. Fields, *by James Curtis (Knopf; $35).* Fields had a big nose, he hated Philadelphia, he bludgeoned swans with a 5-iron, he was almost the wizard in "The Wizard of Oz," he drank himself to death. Everyone knows some tidbit about the beloved screen comedian, but Curtis fluently traces the entire arc of Fields's messy, overstuffed life. The details are irresistible: Fields had a knack for the grand gesture (sending an empty limousine to the set as a protest) and the stiletto wisecrack (he called Mae West "a plumber's idea of Cleopatra"). Curtis is inevitably hampered by the difficulty of explaining what can only be experienced: the effect of Fields's comedy onscreen. Nonetheless, he does an excellent job detailing the meticulous craftsmanship and relentless hard work through which Fields, who began his career as a mute juggler in vaudeville, became a comedian renowned for his verbal dexterity.

The King in the Tree, *by Steven Millhauser (Knopf; $23).* An ingenious geometer of love triangles, Millhauser tinkers with tested formulas in these three novellas, while giving full rein to his taste for the fantastical. Cuckolded King Mark, in a new twist on the legend of Tristan and Isolde, commissions an automaton copy of his banished queen. Don Juan travels to an English country estate, where his playboy instincts run afoul of a quizzical Enlightenment bluestocking. In the weakest of the three novellas, a melodramatic monologue that opens the collection, a bitter widow confronts her late husband's mistress while showing her around their house as a prospective buyer. Yet, no matter how rickety the scenario, Millhauser's shrewd sense of psychology makes his characters' impulses toward romantic excess manifestly believable, as when the chivalrous Tristan realizes that "if he was going to betray at all, then he had to betray as deeply as possible."

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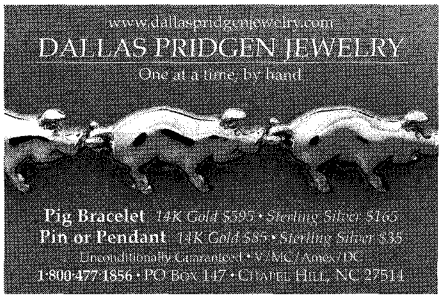

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THE ART WORLD

EUROPEANISM

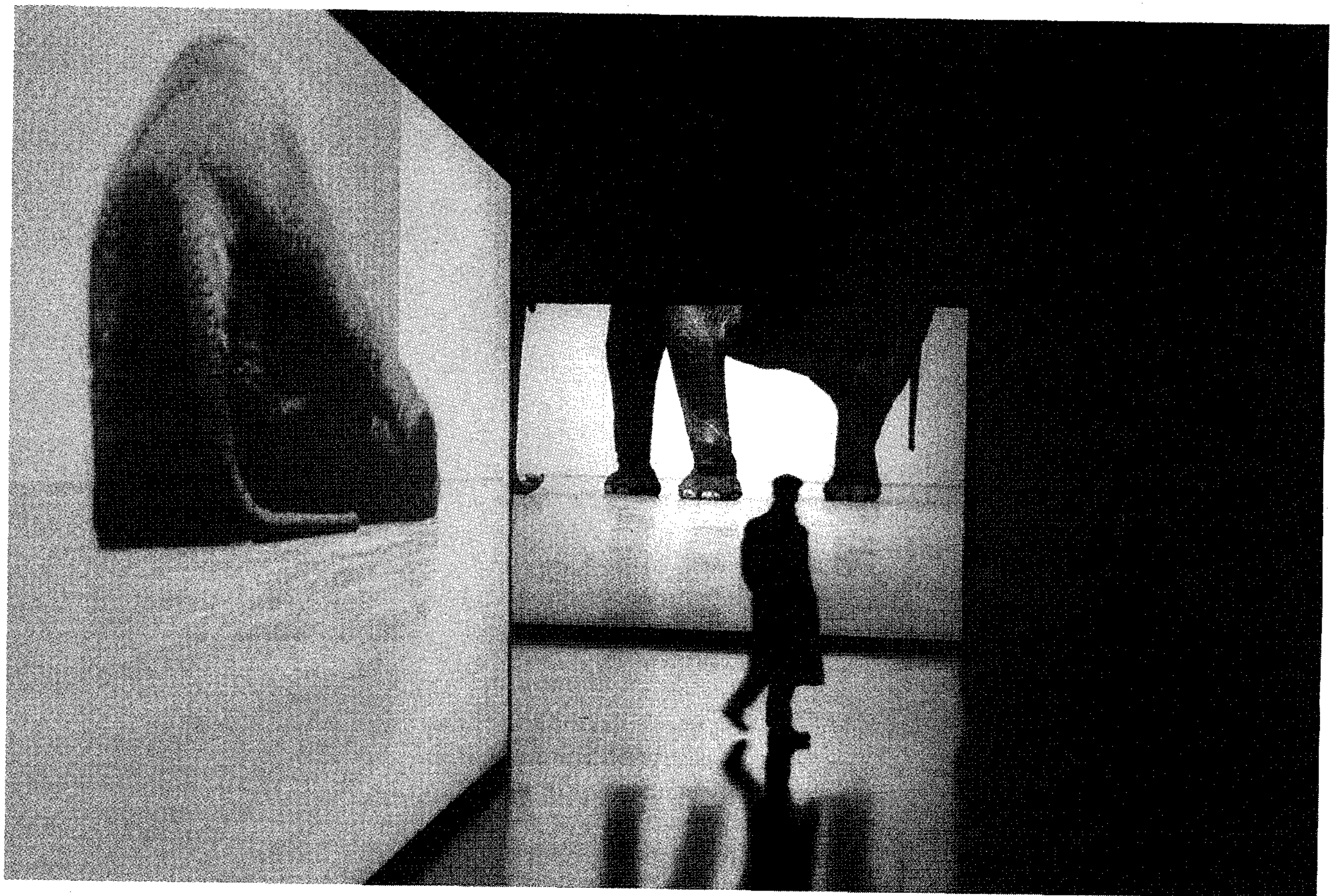
Two transatlantic stars.

BY PETER SCHJELDAHL

A video installation at the Gagosian Gallery features a performance by an Indian elephant. The video, which is the work of the Scottish artist Douglas Gordon, who shot it last year in the gallery, is entitled "Play Dead; Real Time." The elephant's name is Minnie. Viewers enter a vast, darkened room to watch Minnie "playing dead" on two standing screens and a TV monitor. Brightly lit in pristine, empty surroundings, the immense animal lies on one side, perfectly still except for an open, blinking eye that is as soulful as anything the size of a bowling ball can be. Getting up is tough for her. She rocks on her back to build momentum, then heaves herself over. One leg is caught under her flabby mass. She pauses wearily, surges to her forefeet and hind knees, then hauls herself erect. Being an elephant is hard work.

Like most installations by Gordon, who is a thirty-seven-year-old fixture on the circuit of grand international exhibitions of contemporary art, "Play Dead; Real Time" is visually elegant and conceptually nuanced. In sequences that slip into and out of synch with one another on the different screens, the camera glides around Minnie, scrutinizing her baggy, wrinkly, bristly mountainousness—her pachydermity. I felt that I had never looked seriously at an elephant before. Was her gaze, as she did her dopey trick, pained and reproachful? I felt embarrassed for her and for myself. As viewers walked around the room, performing their own kind of learned behavior, their shadows fell on the screens, making them part of the spectacle. A meditation on the extremes of nature and artifice, the piece creates theatre out of some pretty basic philosophical questions. It does so with no-comment cool.

Gordon's installation is one-half of a two-man show at the Gagosian. The other artist on view is Franz West, an Austrian who is represented by, among other things, large paper and even larger aluminum sculptures. The paper constructions are rugged, boulderlike masses, approximately five feet high, that are splashed with many colors of lacquer and acrylic. They taper toward the bottom, resting daintily on embedded paint cans, metal tubing, chair legs, and other bits of junk. Executed with the élan of a lyrical abstract painter, they look like huge floral bouquets for a cartoon giant. The metal sculptures are welded, woozy shapes; they include a circular corral of zigzagging, crumpled tubing, more than sixteen feet in height, and a long vertical stem, twenty



Gordon's "Play Dead; Real Time" meditates with amiable gravitas on nature and artifice. Photograph by Gus Powell.

feet tall, that swells at various points into lumpy spheres, like a monstrous topiary. These works come in startling colors—nursery pink, seasick green, milk-fed-baby's-diaper brown—and they are utterly infectious. Suitable for a public setting, they suggest Apollonian monuments striving to hold their shape against inchoate Dionysian impulses. Like Gordon's "Play Dead," they have a gregarious aplomb that strikes me as peculiarly European.

West, who is fifty-six, is an important figure in European art, but he is not well known in the United States. He first made his name in Vienna, in the late nineteen-sixties, on the heels of a crazy local movement called Actionism, which involved the performance of blood sacrifice, self-mutilation, infantile tantrums, and other assaults on bourgeois propriety in the name of a violent, socially cleansing anarchy. The movement's high point was a group effort at Vienna University in 1968. One artist stripped, cut himself with a razor blade, urinated, excreted, drank his own urine, smeared himself with excrement, masturbated, and vomited. The audience sat stunned. Then a student stood up and said, "Thank you very much. I enjoyed your performance enormously." Turning to the audience, he said, "I think these gentlemen have earned a round of applause." The student was Franz West.

Over the years, West has lost none of his puckishness. He is a masterly, droll manipulator of exhibition spaces as zones in which art overlaps with life. He blurs private and public behavior in his own life, having embraced communal living arrangements and a certain degree of chaos. (He gave up drinking a few years ago, on doctor's orders.)

West's art satirizes dewy presumptions of creative spontaneity. His largest body of work consists of what he calls "Passtücke" ("Adaptables")—oddly shaped plaster and papier-mâché objects that suggest prostheses or medical implements. They are meant to be picked up and played with by the viewer, who may wear them, brandish them, or just carry them around, thereby becoming a self-aware performer. None of these objects are at the Gagosian, though hand-painted posters comically advertise their use. West also makes outsized sofas and chairs—there's a red oval pouf in the gallery—out of construction rebar, which he then covers with rugs or fabrics in lively colors. They are voluptuously comfortable, and to sit on them is to make a spectacle of one's ease.

Gordon's rise was more conventional. He made a splash, in 1993, with a video installation entitled "24 Hour Psycho," in which Hitchcock's horror classic was projected at a rate of two frames per second, amplifying the eerie power of the movie's images. He has made revelatory use of other iconic Hollywood films, superimposing "The Song of Bernadette" over "The Exorcist," for example, to mix the effects of divine and infernal supernaturalism. He has projected the signature moment of "Taxi Driver"—Robert De Niro saying "You talkin' to me?" to himself—on opposite walls, putting viewers into a crossfire of schizophrenia. His videos, before his study of Minnie, have tended to be modest. Some involve nothing more than hand gestures—such as a beckoning index finger—that become alarming with repetition. That's entertainment? It is, in a vein of art tailored for big international shows like Documenta and the Venice Biennale. Between 1996 and 1998, Gordon scored a hat trick when he won the Turner Prize, the Venice Premio, and the Hugo Boss Award.

Both Gordon and West, although they are twenty years apart in age, are distinctively New Europeans, reflecting a social-democratic notion of culture: art for a homogeneous, festive public. Their work addresses a knowing, receptive audience. Each artist is from a city outside the mainstream of contemporary art. Gordon is from Glasgow. Actionism notwithstanding, West's home town, Vienna, hasn't been a major art center for eighty years; West has helped put it back on the map. Like other leading contemporary European artists, such as Gerhard Richter and Sigmar Polke, Gordon and West have taken their bearings from the high tide of American avant-gardism in the nineteen-sixties. Gordon is plainly influenced by Bruce Nauman, but his work eschews the harrowing, alienated emotions of Nauman's video installations. West's sculpture recalls certain pieces by Claes Oldenburg, but without the American's strenuously jokey imagery. West's vernacular sociability can do without references to mass culture, though it may indulge in a few, strictly for fun, as in his collage-paintings of professional models ecstatically sporting Passtücke.

This is a delightful show, with serious edges. Gordon's elephant and West's inspired sloppiness evoke, in different ways, something primordial and unsocialized. To enjoy them is to admit and accept human frailty: in the case of Gordon, a discontented relationship with nature; in that of West, a stubborn childishness. Both artists, with consummate formal poise, celebrate the institutional spaces in which they exhibit as settings of liberal benediction. For all the outlandishness of their work, their essential spirit is one of tolerance. Go ahead and get a little nervous and nutty, they say. Doesn't everybody from time to time? Their amiable gravitas, which bespeaks shared values and even-tempered taste, is very European. You won't find anything much like it in American contemporary art, where the nervous and the nutty, while not scarce, are unmediated by any social contract.

For handy comparison, this show coincides with the reign, at the Guggenheim Museum, of America's top artist-showman these days, Matthew Barney. Barney's five gorgeous and hermetic "Cremaster" films and related sculpture, drawings, photography, and ornamentation make a cornucopia of Frank Lloyd Wright's spiral. The sheer spectacle is thrilling. But a searching visit to the show was a bummer. Barney's gnomic symbology—all those mythic critters and grisly initiation rites, the blimps, the motorcycles, Richard Serra, Budapest, and the Chrysler Building—is humorless and numbing. It isn't pretentious, exactly, because pretense presupposes a desire to impress. Barney's art is a solipsistic, closed loop, in which the viewer is superfluous. But the Guggenheim show should not be missed, as evidence of good old American individualism gone rancid. ♦

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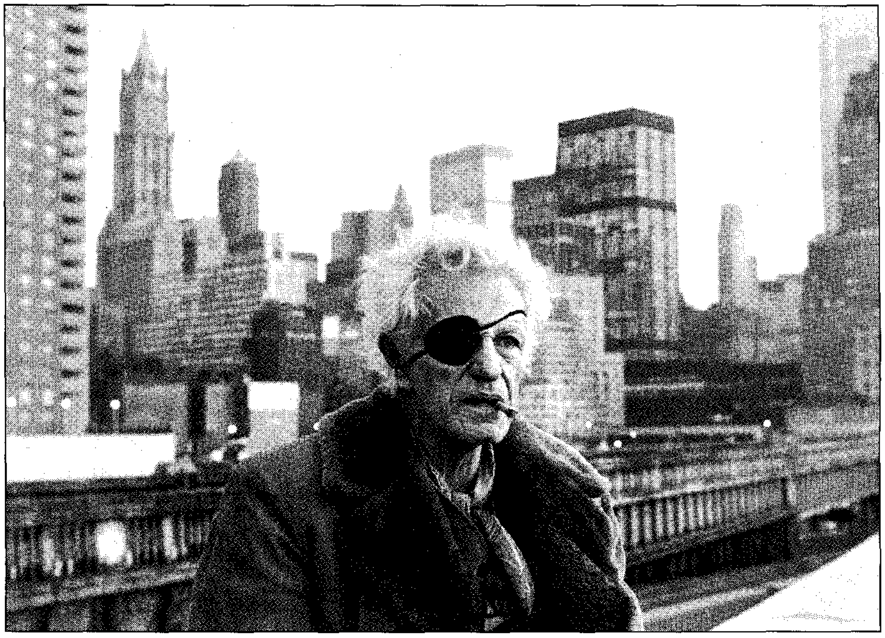
THE CURRENT CINEMA

ONLY THE LONELY

A Nicholas Ray retrospective.

BY ANTHONY LANE

I blame the French. In the nineteen-fifties, the young guns of *Cahiers du Cinéma* turned their sights upon American film. François Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard, and Jacques Rivette, among others, declared their immortal love for certain American directors. “Cinema is Nicholas Ray,” Godard wrote. Then, as now, French dreaminess about America was nicely entwined with disdain, allowing a critic of the Old World both to laud his master in the New and to sneer at the society that failed to share such reverence. The viewers who stayed away from Ray's “Johnny Guitar,” say, didn't know what they were missing.



Ray in New York in 1977. His movies teem with solitude.

PHOTOFEST

Poor Nick Ray. No artist should be asked to weather such unmitigated awe. The French were right to honor the convulsive strangeness of “Johnny Guitar” (1954), the tale of a saloonkeeper (Joan Crawford) fighting, with the aid of an old flame (Sterling Hayden), to survive a lynch mob. Only foreign eyes, perhaps, could widen with suitable amazement, and without a tremolo of sniggers, at the movie's lunging gestures and superheated tones. When our heroine is advised to change out of her milk-white dress to evade pursuit, she sensibly slips into a shirt of blinding red, suggesting that she has also found time to don a radioactive bra. What Godard and his colleagues could not register—and what, as moralists of the pure image, they would dismiss as irrelevant—were the qualities that an American audience would bring to bear. Good sense, the narrative urge, a limited patience for the warped and the whimsical: all would be tested by a film like “Johnny Guitar,” which seems about as clued in to actual cowboys as Puccini's “The Girl of the Golden West.” The movie is majestic, but, like the face of Joan Crawford, which could have been chipped from the buttress of a Gothic cathedral, it is howlingly close to mad.

New Yorkers can now judge how deep the madness went. The film department of the Museum of Modern Art is laying on a retrospective entitled “Nicholas Ray, Writ Large,” which runs through April 12th. “Flying Leathernecks,” his 1951 saga of a Marine Air Corps squadron, will be screened in rare three-strip Technicolor, which should do wonders for the peaches-and-cream complexion of John Wayne. Hunters of oddity will lock on to “High Green Wall,” a 1954 television film adapted from a short story by Evelyn Waugh. (Now *there’s* an unlikely duo: think of a Joshua Reynolds repainted by van Gogh.) Then, we get new prints of movies like “In a Lonely Place” (1950), “The Lusty Men” (1952), “Hot Blood” (1956), “Bigger Than Life” (1956), and “Bitter Victory” (1958), the very titles of which should serve as an ominous introduction. Ray’s movies, which deal with everything from dancing Gypsies to a middle-class cortisone addict, teem with solitude; one staggers out of them with the dizzying suspicion that men and women are like planets and moons, each following a predestined curve, repeatedly tugged or slung away by the gravity of other bodies. All of Ray can be boiled down to a single word from “In a Lonely Place.” Humphrey Bogart plays a Hollywood screenwriter who is suspected of killing a hat-check girl. The morning after the crime, he is visited by a cop, a friend who fought beside him in the war, and who now comes bearing news:

> “You know I got married.”
> “Why?”

Nicholas Ray (1911-79) was born Raymond Nicholas Kienzle, in Galesville, Wisconsin. He studied under Frank Lloyd Wright and later claimed that if Wright could be detected anywhere in his movies it was in “my liking for Cinemascope.” That liking found concrete form in “Rebel Without a Cause” (1955)—think of the tussle that James Dean has with a knife-swiping rival on a platform of land below the planetarium, which they’ve just visited on a class trip. Everything about the scene—the hard blue day, the stabbing of the whitewall tires, the parapet overlooking the city against which the boys sidle and thrust, the bird’s-eye view of the brawl—brands itself on your gaze as smartly as any crisis of your own teen-age years. The silvery motions of youth are staged with enough grace to make you gasp but not so much that they look stage-managed. Ray would have made great musicals; watch “Rebel” again, then wonder what he might have done with “West Side Story.”

As a director, he hit his stride at once, and his career flourished as swiftly as it expired. A mere fifteen years separate his startling début, “They Live by Night” (1948), from “Fifty-five Days at Peking,” in which Charlton Heston saves the Imperial City from marauding hordes. It is common practice to compare Ray’s fluidly personal works, such as “Rebel Without a Cause,” with the cooler, more solidified projects that were entrusted to him by the studios. But it is also a mark of dedication that the visionary—Ray was labelled “the Mystic” by Robert Mitchum—should impose himself, or at least the acute angle at which he sees the world, upon the most stubborn environment. There was a tough-guy challenge in the way epic assignments were handed, like untamable horses, to Hollywood men whose gift for intimacy hinted at a delicate emotional constitution. Thus, the William Wyler of “The Heiress” found himself saddled with “Ben-Hur,” Anthony Mann was given “El Cid” as a reward—or rebuke—for his tense, unhappy Westerns, and Ray shifted from “On Dangerous Ground” and “In a Lonely Place” to juggernauts like “Fifty-five Days at Peking” and “King of Kings.”

Even here, however, a nervy brilliance sneaks through. To current filmgoers, nothing is more Biblically remote than the epoch in which their forerunners sat through “King of Kings” (1961), a retelling of the life of Christ. Certainly, the sight of Robert Ryan, the veteran of three previous Rays, swapping his overcoat and fedora for the fetching sheepskin outfit of John the Baptist is less than spiritually convincing, and a more merciful God would have allowed him to disappear completely into his enormous beard. But, against the odds, the movie comes alive: first, after the slaughter of the innocents, as Herod cracks with remorse—the Jimmy Dean of year zero. Finer still is the healing of the blind man, a brief and wordless sequence played out in patterns of light and dark: a stick taps along a white wall, then touches the shadow cast by Jesus’ head. Thus cured, the man slumps in terrified joy. The film has nothing to tell us about the redemption of sin, but there are moments when it redeems the kitsch of a derided genre.

And so to the question that nags at Ray’s achievement, and that may be answered by MOMA’s invigorating season: Was he a man of moments, or do the pictures hang together? As early as 1953, Jacques Rivette identified in Ray a “taste for paroxysm, which imparts something of the feverish and impermanent to the most tranquil of moments.” “On Dangerous Ground” (1951), a high point of neurosis in film noir, stars Robert Ryan as a cop so tautened by his calling that the simplest act turns savage; in his apartment, he washes and dries his hands as if wringing the neck of an invisible suspect. As for “Rebel Without a Cause,” it is not just a portrait of adolescence; it breathes haltingly, with adolescent lungs, unable, like so much in Ray, to contain itself under the pressure of the encroaching world. You long, occasionally, for urbanity, for the comic shrug that would lower the temperature of feeling—as you do with Martin Scorsese, who is surely Ray’s most forceful heir, sharing his tendency to switch scale (think of “Mean Streets” ballooning into “Gangs of New York”) and his relief that, in a universe of unstable loyalties, there is always the color red. I love “The Lusty Men,” Ray’s saddest work, and, like every viewer before me, I am felled by the beauty of the shot that finds Mitchum—a rodeo rider—limping amid gusts of trash through a vacant arena, with the sharp, heartbreaking light of late afternoon slicing in from the side. At the same time, I cannot rid myself of an anecdote reported by Mitchum’s biographer, Lee Server. A leading lady was required, and Susan Hayward was brought in, on loan from Twentieth Century Fox, while the script was still being written. She sat and knitted for a while, as Ray spoke of his characters and their various plights. Finally, she put down her knitting and said, “Listen, I’m from Brooklyn. What’s the *story*?” ♦

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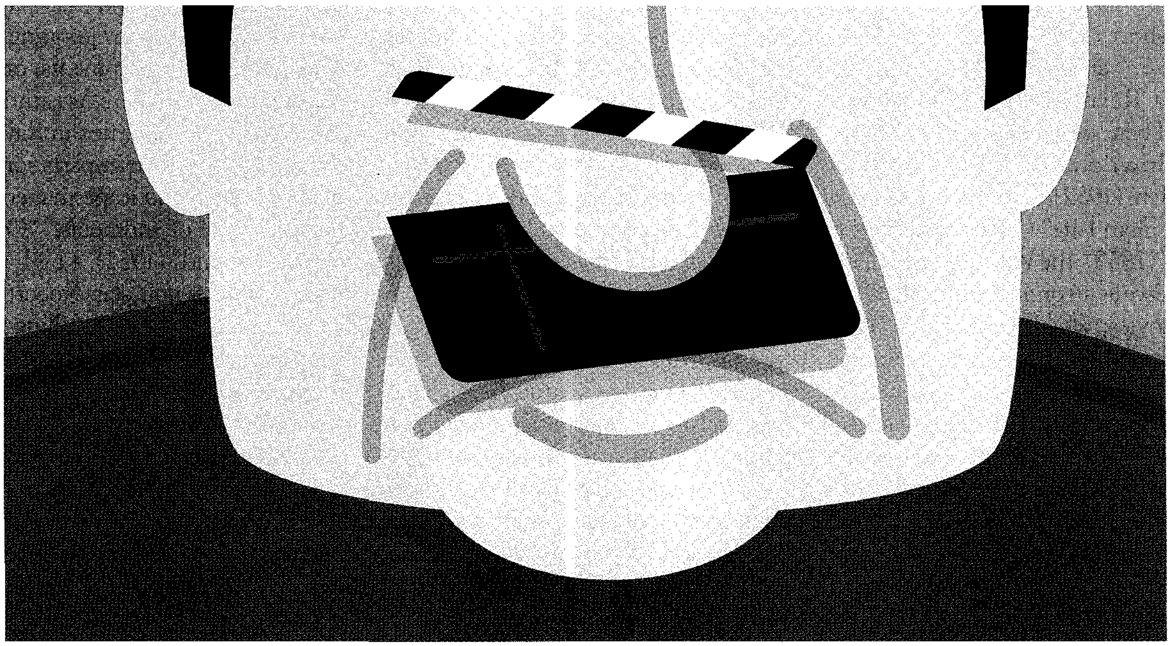
THE BACK PAGE BY STEVE MARTIN

IRAQ: AN ACTOR'S VIEW



My intelligence has told me that if Iraq violates the 180th Parallel or intrudes even weaponically across the Kuwaiti border north of the mountain city of Kundalini, the Kurdish opposition could smash any transgression south of the floodplains, or at least the area above the floodplains, or, in case there are no floods, that sort of grassy area in the hills. Well, really it's not so grassy, according to my intelligence.

However, I have inferred from my travel brochures that a few well-armed men could sneak in from northern Turkey and capture the city of, uh, one of the smaller cities, or possibly go through Islamatown (I know the actual name of the city is Islamabad, but I don't like the implication). We could then negotiate with the Tanjekestan footmen and bring about a peaceful settlement, if and only if North Korea decides to switch completely from direct current to alternating current.

See, if we could just get Saddam and the President in a room together and have them watch, say, "Singin' in the Rain," I don't think we'd have much of a problem. Because the nature of that movie is to celebrate joy and fun and silliness. So how could two men, even those who have vast ideological differences, such as when and how much to bomb the living daylights out of each other, hate one another after seeing "Singin' in the Rain"? Since "Singin' in the Rain" is an American movie, I think that, for the sake of balance, it should be followed by a live performance of Saddam's romantic play, "Your Eyes Don't Make Me Want to Spit in No Camel's Face." I have seen "Your Eyes Don't Make Me Want to Spit in No Camel's Face," though, and I have to say it did not induce heavy mitting from the audience. It's also nine hours long; President Bush would just have to tolerate this.

Another plan I've been thinking about is to kidnap Saddam and a few other Al Qaeda higher-ups and bring them to Los Angeles. Here they could be given a rental car and set free in the residential areas of the city. They would soon experience the friendly "you go first" traffic wave, and would be so seduced by it that they would want to live here. Or at least they would begin to understand that we Americans are really a bunch of friendly people who just want to let the other guy go first, and then, a minute later, pass him by flooring it in the right-turn lane while flipping him the bird. If Saddam decided to relocate here, we could give him a suburban block in the Valley to control as a sop.

My intelligence sources have also told me that Saddam is sitting on a big pile of Botox. Fine.

Obviously, Saddam is in hiding. If you were living underground with very little access to the outside, wouldn't it be great to meet the cast of "Everybody Loves Raymond"? Of course it would. Saddam would welcome the cast of "Everybody Loves Raymond" with open arms. Then—*blewie!* The cast of "Everybody Loves Raymond" would forever live in our memory as great American heroes.

I am of the opinion, based on the above, that we should not invade Iraq at this time. I believe we should get Iraq to invest in a movie. Saddam would then be distracted by obsessing over why the critics just didn't get it, while losing his oil fields to creative accounting.

Note to Saddam's makeup man: swarthy is out. I suggest a lighter base with a hint of blush. Dot on some lip gloss for a sunny glint. ♦

CHRISTOPH NIEMANN

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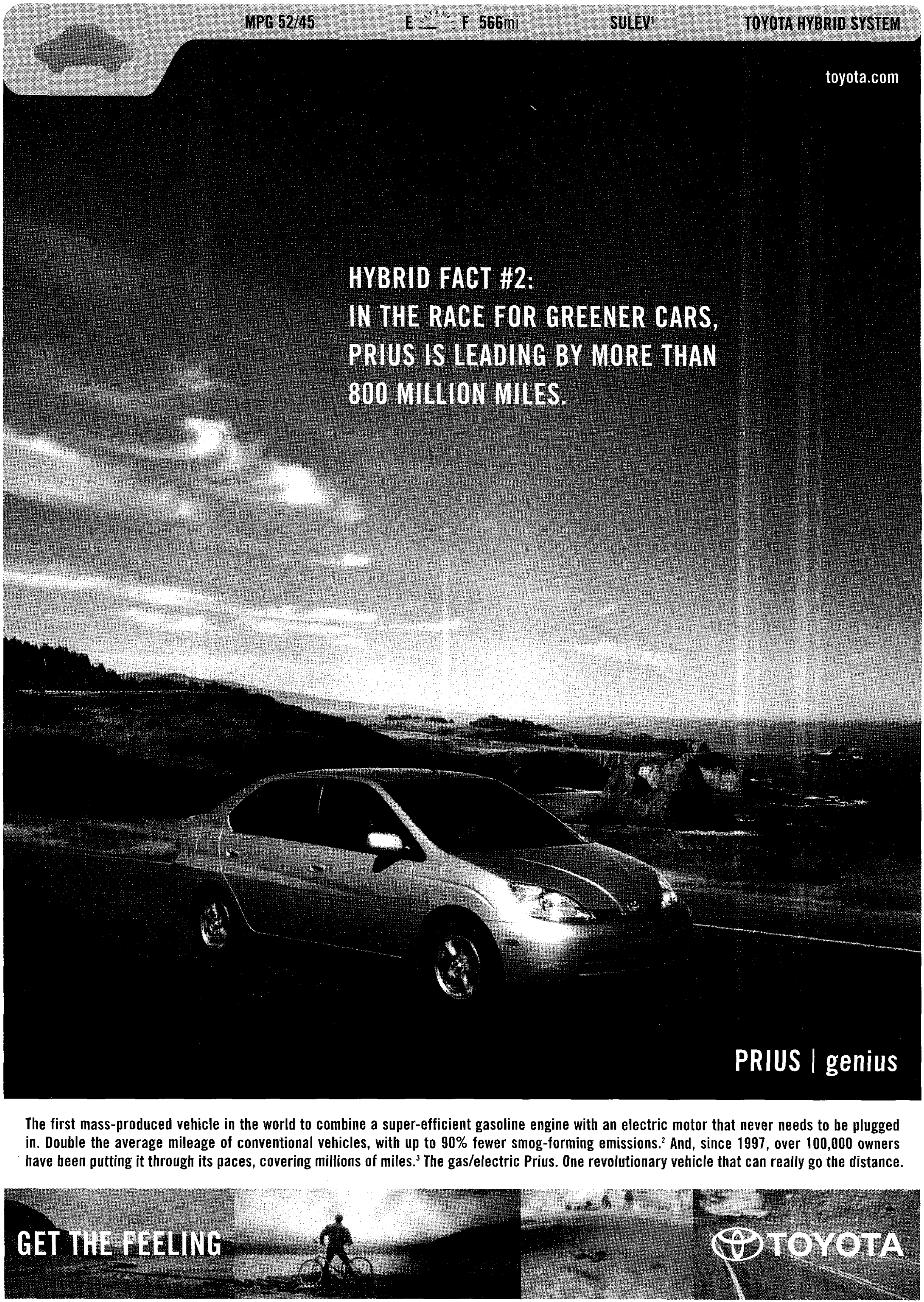

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